

PRINTER'S INK

and Unreal Truths: the lies in every story: an exegesis to accompany Printer's Ink



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Abstract

This thesis comprises two components: a novel titled “Printer’s Ink” and an exegetical essay, “Unreal Truths: The Lies in Every Story”. These two documents together articulate my primary research question, “*Does borrowing from another’s life to create a story develop a (perceived) debt to the subject in the writer’s conscience and if so, does that debt influence how the writer finally depicts the character?*” Further, it addresses the subsidiary issues which arose from the writing of the artefact. These can be summed up as follows: “*Does transference activated through generational family narrative impact on the writer’s ability to clearly depict an historical character with impunity?*”

“Printer’s Ink” is an epistolary work written from the perspective of Marion Leathem, a newspaper Proprietress in Central West New South Wales from 1879 to 1919. The epistolary genre is used to tell the life of this character in fictional biographic style through the medium of her letters to family, business associates and friends. The novel illustrates how epistolary narrative and historical fiction can recreate a life through the emotional connection of self as “other” by allowing the psychoanalytic phenomena of transference and countertransference to filter the writing through the psyche of the writer’s unconscious mind.

The exegesis discusses the theories, methodologies and fictional techniques utilised in the artefact through the prisms of autoethnography and historiography. As such, it deploys the modes of both research led practice and practice led research. “Unreal Truths” reflects on the works of historical biographic fiction and epistolary non-fiction of the Victorian era using archival documents and published works by real women writers to locate epistolarity within the parameters of Australian colonial and postcolonial times.

The thesis extends the scholarly discourse which relates to the internal dialogue between the subject and the author, and explores how the psychological paradigms of transference, countertransference, post memory and empathy determine the final form of the artefact through self-reflexive practices and strategies. This work provides research and resolutions that have eluded significant scholarly inquiry thus far on the use of self-analysis as a tool in the production of authentic narrative.

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And lastly to Molly whose birth in 2009 was the catalyst for finding out so much about Marion through my own writing. Molly, I hope you will one day appreciate all the incredible women who have pioneered your journey.

Declaration

I declare that this Artefact and Thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award to the candidate of any other degree or diploma, except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome

To the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome.

Photos used are from family archives and to the best of my knowledge do not need permission for use from any other party.

Document formatting and proof reading was conducted by Diane Murray and Chris Morris and editing was undertaken by Dr Rachel Le Rossignol in accordance with the Australian Standards for Editing Practice (ASEP) for research students' theses and dissertations.

Signed

Diane Murray

May 2016

Dedication

For my father Noel Murray who always believed in me

And for Chris who I hope always will.

And of course,

For Marion.

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Introduction

Only a novel can imply certain truths. Biography and autobiography are forced to attempt exact definition. In doing so truth goes astray.

(Anthony Powell, *Hearing Secret Harmonies*)

This introduction explains why I became interested in Marion Leathem as a subject for the PhD. It articulates my primary research question, “*Does borrowing from another’s life to create a story, develop a (perceived) debt to the subject in the writer’s conscience and if so, does that debt influence how the writer finally depicts the character?*” It also addresses the subsidiary issues which arose from the writing of the artefact. These can be summed up as follows: “*Does transference activated through generational family narrative impact on the writer’s ability to clearly depict an historical character with impunity?*”

Marion Wrixon Leathem 1841-1919, my maternal great, great grandmother, came to Australia as an infant of six months with her father, Dr William Large, the surgeon superintendent on the *Branken Moor*, with his wife, Mary-Ann Caroline Wrixon Large, and two elder siblings. After a happy childhood in Melbourne and Tumut, Marion married Henry Vale Leathem in 1866 and moved first to Gundagai and then Molong for Henry’s work. In 1879 Marion took over the Proprietresship of the fledgling *Molong Express and Western Districts Advertiser* newspaper when her husband, Henry Vale Leathem, died from the sudden onset of pneumonia at the age of thirty-six. At the time, Marion had six children under the age of ten years, with the youngest being just a few months old. She ran the newspaper successfully, first alone and then with the assistance of her sons, until her death at the age of 78. It has been stated that she never missed a day at her desk.

I chose to write her life as an epistolary novel, allowing her fictional letters to be an effective device to bring my readers into more personal contact with the indomitable woman my research had shown her to be. I called my book “Printer’s Ink” because the story of Marion and her newspaper was so indelibly etched into our family annals. Her life represents, especially to the women in our family; the pinnacle of an independent and successful woman who won against all odds, and chronicles what can be achieved when one has faith in oneself.

The exegesis reveals the difficulties of historical biography in relation to the accurate portrayal of a subject, including the events of her life, when scrutinised through the conflicting research and generational memories which had up until this time defined her character. Both research and family stories create a preconceived image of a character, which can impact on the author’s subconscious mind when aiming for truthful depiction.

Marion Leathem’s last photograph shows a stern faced woman in late middle age, wearing Victorian garb, confronting the camera with a steely eyed stare which is daunting and intimidating. The challenge was to find the warm and humane aspects of this opinionated woman who “holding pronounced views on political and public questions ...considered it her duty as the controller of a press organ to expound those views with all the forces at her command”. (*Molong Express*, p. 7)

My extensive archival research revealed that there were more stories to Marion’s life than simply her own. Her parents, her uncles and cousin, her children and their children, all had stories which interwove with Marion’s and the often told events, commonly held as truth in our family. These side stories challenged the accepted family truths and as I wrote “Printer’s Ink” I found myself overtaken by a variety of facts that disrupted the family legacy. Because Marion was such a respectable, upstanding and even intimidating figure, the facts I uncovered appeared to be an affront to her memory. I therefore started to question the way I had chosen to write about her life and

the wisdom of unearthing long forgotten truths which might impact on those still living, who are not even aware of their evolved history.

One family member in particular, Marion's eldest granddaughter, Fanny, touched a deep place within me. When I found Fanny's surviving daughters, I was further confronted by the story I had chosen to write. I encountered destructive bouts of transference and countertransference between myself and Marion as I tried to make sense of the research already undertaken and write the story I had intended to write.

Transference is a mechanism at work in all human relationships (even though it was first discovered in the context of the talking cure) whereby a particular situation is given affect and meaning that do not seem justified by what is actually happening (Freud, 1853). When this occurs, "The self overflows itself or is carried away and becomes involved in other selves, with an uncanny pattern of relating that is typically repeated in a compulsive way" (La Capra 2014, p. xvi). In contrast, countertransference is "a result of the patient's influence on (the physician's) unconscious feelings" (cited by Quinodoz, 2005, p. 112). Because an analyst is also human, he or she can easily be affected by the analysand or conversely let their own emotions imbue the patient. I discovered that these phenomena are also true of the writer/character relationship: I was experiencing both processes towards my character at different times in my writing journey.

These phenomena elongated the project as I struggled to right the generational wrongs perpetrated on Fanny, a character who insisted on being written into the story through the dual prisms of these unbidden processes. It seemed necessary to both retain the original family history as well as placate those family members still alive, who had some living knowledge of these two key characters.

My exegesis discusses how this struggle impacted on "Printer's Ink" and how the two opposing constituents of the dissertation eventually worked together

to produce the final research for the artefact and resolve the research questions. This resolution revealed new possibilities for research into epistolary biography and fictional history when written and viewed through the autoethnography of generational family memory. It seemed necessary to both ground the major characters in the framework of the authentic research whilst allowing them, through the phenomena of transference and countertransference, to define the full spectrum of their potential.

The exegesis question is argued and answered using the modes of practice led research and research led practice (Smith & Dean, 2009) including archival research, historical research and single point epistolary biography. It is underpinned by the psychoanalytical concepts of transference and countertransference with the main character because the presence of transference and countertransference strongly influenced the composition process, research directives and the final form of the artefact. The exegesis explains how transference and countertransference challenged ethical considerations in the depiction of Marion Leathem and their possible impacts on her family. It also addresses how these considerations were researched and considered in the best interests of all parties before being resolved throughout “Printer’s Ink” by utilising the concepts of post memory and generational trauma in relation to biographic discourse.

The epistolary form is used as a medium to create an intimacy with the character. By allowing the reader to be an observer, unwittingly, of her most private correspondence, the many facets of Marion Leathem are displayed as she writes letters discussing her personal affairs, her family, her children and her business affairs. The reader sees how Marion comports herself with each individual correspondent by what and how she writes. The epistolary form provides this connection with the subject in a more engaging way than straight biography and I will show in the next chapter why I believe this to be true.

The overriding theme of the exegesis is how the personal involvement of the author can both consciously and unconsciously influence the final outcome of the biography and how the author is generally not even aware of the processes which direct the intent of the writing.

Finding Marion's epistolary voice had me writing her letters with quill and ink by candlelight well into the night as I looked at ways to develop a sense of synergy with her character. With none of her actual letters available, every avenue of Marion Leathem's life was investigated to determine what sort of businesswoman, mother, wife, daughter or grandmother she might have been in order to determine how she would address those she loved as well as those she did not in every situation. Authentic voice was crucial.

The final core identity of Marion Leathem was determined by both her background and her perceived circumstances. As a way of finding these twin entities, I embarked on an extensive research journey into the archives of her newspaper and other written, digitised and printed sources of similar biographies available to me. Second hand and antiquarian book dealers around the world procured out of print books from discarded archives, libraries and private collections, including an original, uncut copy off *Jacob Shumate – The Peoples March* (Wrixon 1903), the autobiographical work of her cousin Henry Wrixon, once Attorney General of Victoria and Vice Chancellor of Melbourne University.

The majority of my research was undertaken at the NSW State Library which had some limited copies of *The Molong Express* on microfiche and *Trove* who, during the course of the research, made *The Molong Express* archives available through their website.

For experiential research, trips were undertaken to Ireland, England and all the towns in Australia which had any association with Marion or her family. Historical societies, ancestral houses, schools, museums, family history groups, hospitals, pioneer medical websites and libraries were all explored

and contacted for information and I trawled up and down the aisles of cemeteries on three continents looking for people who had been important to Marion.

As the only written correspondence of Marion's available was the formal editorial style from her own newspaper, the voice of Marion Leathem was finally determined through reading the documented letters of other women of similar demeanour and position. Experimenting with different means of writing to develop a mood to emulate Marion's writing style and tone, I chose from the varied documented works of actual letters and journals, but predominantly the writings of Georgiana McCrae (1934); Mary Braidwood Moyle (Clarke 1986); Louisa Lawson (1990); Miles Franklin (1993); Rachel Henning (1951-2) and Georgiana Molloy (Hasluck 1955). Marion Leathem's final artefact voice therefore is a composite of the written words of other, similarly placed characters and my own intuitive sense of the real Marion Leathem.

The ensuing research into transference and countertransference allowed me to analyse the processes which were occurring during the research and writing of "Printer's Ink", enabling me to detect my reactions to them. Research into transference and countertransference via the writings of a number of academic and practicing psychiatrists, psychologists and therapists generated a diverse amount of information which needed to be examined and viewed through the filters of emotions, memory and experience.

Whilst Freud first coined the term transference, (Freud 1956) the writings of Jung, (2013). Grant (2002), Gabbard (1999), Edel (1984) and Andersen & Miranda (2000), amongst others, allowed me to view the related effects of shame, projection and affect regulation on my writing. My connection with Marion Leathem, melding both of our experiences and families to create her story, generated a debt to my character in my conscience, which affected how I wrote about her. This influence deflected the true intent of the writing

and the direction of the story, ultimately dictating my research questions through the sheer power of their impact on my work.

The reflective journal I kept for the duration of the PhD allowed me to understand how research into Marion and writing her letters enmeshed me totally with my character. As the research into various phases of Marion's life at times paralleled and reflected current events in my own life, I immersed myself into the psychological phases I experienced for the duration of the work. By allowing myself to use "lost or denied elements" (Murphy 1989, p. 175) of myself, I discovered a deep connection with numerous aspects of the various characters in "Printer's Ink", swinging between the primary and secondary characters. The journal helped me track this unbidden emotional praxis and eventually use it to create an articulation between the artefact and the exegesis. The voice of Marion in her letters and my own voice in the journal allowed me to shift between the three written sources of journal, artefact and exegesis, finally producing the two final documents for the PhD.

PRINTERS INK

Diane Murray

“The only educator...the only medium by which the ordinary intelligence as to what is going on in the world of letters and science, as well as in the political world, is communicated to the remote dwellers of the far interior.”

Henry Parkes – The Daily Empire, 17 April 1857



Marion Wrixon Large Leathem 1841-1919
Proprietress - The Molong Express and Western
Districts Advertiser 1879-1919



We have received the first imitation of a new arrival in the literary world in the shape of the "Molong Express."

We are inclined to think the arrival of the bantling was hardly expected, as the baby-clothes, &c (in the shape of a type) had not arrived from Sydney.

Still the infant is a promising one, and like all children, will grow more in the first week than ever afterwards.

We are glad to say the little stranger is, in lady's parlance, very like his papa and as we have long known Mr Leathem as a good writer, and a thorough pressman, we hope the child of his adoption will give evidence of the many superior traits of character of its parent.

The Gundagai Times and Tumut, Adelong and Murrumbidgee
District Advertiser 13 October, 1876.





Molong Express Office
Riddell Street
1 October 1876

Dr and Mrs William Large
"Chillingly",
Kincaid Street
Wagga

My dearest mother and father

I am enclosing for your interest a copy of the first edition of The Molong Express and Western Districts Advertiser.

There have been so many difficulties in the birth of this newspaper than I feel we have all become new mothers, nurturing and coaxing, angry and conciliatory and above all as proud as it is possible to be.

Henry and his brother John have worked continuously for the last two days overcoming all the initial problems of ink which refused to dry quickly enough, a misalignment in the mechanism of the press and the continuing wet weather which left the paper limp and difficult to fold without tearing. We have all taken our turns cajoling this paper into life and it was with great relief that we saw the bundles leave the workroom this morning, swaddled in string with our new masthead bold and black at the top.

The townspeople of Molong, so long without their own source of news, were as much excited as the proprietors to see the newspaper come straight off the press and into their welcoming hands and we had a queue at the front door from six this morning, waiting for the first edition. Despite my initial protestations, Henry and his brother positioned Charles and William at the front door and instructed them that they must only accept the correct change of "three pence" for the paper. They did this with great joy thinking that all the money they were gathering was to go into their own pockets and when they were told this was not the case, I was forced to lead away the two small and disappointed children who were placated with a penny each for their trouble.

The readers seemed quite pleased with our efforts and we have been receiving visitors and notes all day thanking us for providing them with a source of local news and information from around the country and the world. Having lived without newspapers for so long, they were happy to overlook some of the ink blotted copies which we were originally intending to destroy. In fact, demand for copies was so great that we decided to offer the less perfect copies for a penny and they were soon sold out.

One elderly woman, very neatly dressed and with a sumptuous carriage and glossy horses alighted at our door with a basket of flowers and introduced herself as Mrs Anne Lee, the widow of William Lee. She is a personage of some importance in these parts but one whom we had not yet met. She declined our offer of tea but she has invited me out to her property Larras Lake next Tuesday for a meeting of the quilting ladies. I'm not greatly disposed to quilting, as you know, but as it is an opportunity to meet those who may have some influence over the success of The Express I will willingly thread needles and sew squares for an afternoon each week.

In the excitement, we had forgotten to keep some copies for ourselves and so before the plates were dismantled, Henry and John were encouraged to produce another twenty copies of the paper for us to send to our family and friends. John and Henry are both much interested in the reaction of their father to their venture and I am sure they will have a response in due course, for I had already written to Mr Leathem asking him to honour his son's achievement. As well, a copy has been sent directly to Henrietta and James Elworthy for their comments. Despite leaving the paper in Gundagai, Henry and James remain firm friends and we are hoping he and Henrietta may visit us soon. I have also sent a copy to cousin Henry Wrixon in Melbourne as he featured in one of our first articles.

Tonight we were to have a celebratory meal at our house, indeed Alice had made and iced a layer cake for the occasion, but both Henry and John were so exhausted by the workload of the last few days, they fell asleep at their desks and I had to wake them to go to bed. I thought an early evening for all would be appreciated, but we had callers until mid-evening and although I have been up as many hours as the men, I feel quite exhilarated by the whole process and do not feel tired at all, serving cake and conversation till well after midnight.

Please accept my apologies for the lack of other news in this letter but the Express has been such a source of anticipation and all consuming interest that all else seems of little consequence and I had to write to you as soon as

we knew whether our venture had been a success and I think I can safely now report it is.

I will now gather my wits and attempt to tackle the chores, which have been sorely neglected these past few days. Luckily Alice, who is now ten, is a natural helper and has managed the care of Nellie and John very efficiently to give me time to assist Henry and his brother, who condescended that my assistance had been valuable.

There is no other who would share our excitement as well as you and I wanted you to be the first to know that The Molong Express is now a real, honest to goodness newspaper.

You loving daughter

Marion



**Albion Printing
Press & Type Block–
from F T Wimble and
Company**

**Courtesy of
Powerhouse
Museum Sydney and
Meadowbank TAFE**

Photos Diane Murray





Riddell Street
Molong
25 October 1876

Mrs Julia Ratliff
Bethwick Street
Wagga Wagga

My dearest Julia

I have not had a free moment to answer your wonderful letter but its sentiments have sustained me through all the difficulties and hard work of moving towns, opening a newspaper and settling the family into our new home.

Only you will understand my determination to make the transition to Molong as successful as possible and I think I can say today, with the third edition of The Molong Express off the press that we have made a significant impression on the town.

Our lovely new Albion press caused quite a fracas when the cart carrying it became stuck in the creek crossing and needed twelve men to help haul it out of the mud.

Henry, always enterprising, made a joke about how the press was creating its own source of news and he was right because half the town stood along the river and watched the liberation of the press from the bog. The schoolmaster brought down the children, telling them this was a momentous day for Molong, with the arrival of the town's first printing press. So Alice and Charles, being newspaper veterans, did not miss out on seeing the arrival of the press and were pointing out to their contemporaries all the features of the new machine.

I find I have two households to manage, rather than one, as Henry's sister in law, Marian, though a kindly and dear woman, is clueless when given a list of tasks without someone to provide an order of works and a timeframe to complete.

When their wagonload of furniture arrived from Sydney, it was late afternoon on the same day the Albion arrived and both Henry and his brother John

were setting up the office and securing orders from the local businessmen. It was impossible for them to assist in setting up the house, so Marian sat down with her children on the side of the road intending to wait for John to finish at the office, no matter what time that might be, before she began.

With no other men available, I engaged some of the local boys coming home from school who had stopped to stare, and after negotiating a reasonable rate of payment, directed them in uncarting and lifting the various items into the house John had secured for them, next to the Express office. Marian, overwhelmed with the speed of the boys' work, burst into tears and spent most of the afternoon crying into her apron while Alice took the two little ones to play at our house. By 6 o'clock, we had furniture placed, beds made, pots and pans on hooks in the kitchen, the fire lit and enough made ready for Marian to prepare a soup for their supper. She said she was so exhausted by all the activity that she needed to lie down, so we left her alone and took the children to our place for supper.

I hope her constitution improves as she will find that sort of laziness will not be tolerated in this town where women do at least as much as the men to put food on the table.

Henry's father, intrigued by the attention the Express has engendered in newspapers across the country, has decided to come for a visit next week, no doubt to offer his opinion and point out how his sons could do it better. Once having had his own paper, he feels that Henry and John could not possibly manage without his advice. Despite that, I'm looking forward to his visit as he is quite a dear old man and the children, missing my parents, will revel in the attention of a grandparent.

I hope we may have a visit from you too, soon. Although the six day journey to get here is quite daunting, I can promise we will make you very welcome and you will enjoy the scenery as this is a lovely part of the colony.

Your affectionate friend

Marion Leathem



Riddell St
Molong
24 December 1876

Dr and Mrs W Large
"Chillingly"
Kincaid Street
Wagga Wagga

Dearest father and mother,

It is our first Christmas in Molong and tonight the distance between us seems even farther than the miles I need to travel to be with my family.

The children are asleep, having prepared their small offerings for Father Christmas, and will no doubt be awake early in the morning. Henry retired some time ago and although there are many little things that still need to be done for tomorrow's holiday dinner, I felt I must write to you tonight to at least be with you in spirit on this day which I know you always enjoyed so much.

I realised tonight that when we were children in this new country and you were far away from the family and traditions you both knew, you worked at creating a different set of memories from those of your own childhood to make Christmas a special day for us, devoid as we were of family and tradition. As the children hung up their stockings near the unlit fireplace tonight, I remembered how you would fill the hearth with pine cones and berries to give some semblance of a lit fire, even though the evening was too warm by far to light it.

I recall you both telling of Irish Christmas mornings with the sound of sleigh bells ringing across the silent, white landscape as you made your way to church with your family in the big sleigh. Although I have never known a white Christmas and probably never shall, looking across these dusty Molong hills and sitting here in this terrible heat, Christmas seems so closely entwined with one's family and memories, I almost see the moonlight turning the dust to snow.

Tonight, after I had strung our sitting room with garlands made from native pine and mistletoe, and after Henry had cut the Christmas cake, I thought how sad it is to be away from you both and I realised, perhaps for the first time, how much you must have missed your own family when you first came to New South Wales. Even though they have been dead now for some time, you must still miss having your own parents around you at times like tonight as much as I miss your physical presence here in Molong. Now that I have children of my own, it makes me regret even more that I never had a chance to meet any of my grandparents and makes me appreciate how lonely you must have been at times for Ireland and all that it held dear for you.

Our family has always enjoyed closeness and a sense of comradeship surpassing those of most of my acquaintances, but it is times like tonight when I especially miss the comforting arms of your presence and I could almost hear your laughter as I read the children's letters to Father Christmas. You would have enjoyed them. Most of all I missed your fine tenor voice, father, singing all of our favourite hymns and carols, for music has always been for me the very essence of Christmas and of family.

By the time you receive this, Christmas will be just another day crossed off the calendar and the smell of poultry bones simmering in the stock pot, but tonight as I lit our Christmas candle to guide the Christ child to our door, I felt you were close at hand. Across the many miles which separate us tonight, I send you my love and those words you taught us from your own childhood Christmas,

Nollaig shona duit, dear father and mother.

Tá mo chroí istigh ionat

Your loving daughter

Marion



The starting a newspaper at Molong, under the proprietorship of the Messrs. Leathem, seems to have given the place a start, as the Commercial Bank have established a branch there.



Gidley Street
Molong
16 April 1877

Mrs James Elworthy
First Avenue
Gundagai

My dearest sister Henrietta

Congratulations on your new little daughter, Edith. The children were thrilled to hear they have a new cousin, especially Alice and Nellie, in this family dominated by sons. Mr Elworthy's letter though welcome was brief, a journalistic trait I find, as Henry too writes his letters as if he were paying by the word, so I look forward to your longer correspondence when you are well enough to write.

All is well here in Molong, though I do miss your visits each morning and we are so far away from Wagga Wagga now that any type of visit with mother and father is almost impossible. I do get lonely for family by and by, so the arrival of the post each week is one of my highlights. I keep the family letters till after the children have gone to bed and read them at my leisure on the verandah in the twilight until it gets too dark to see and then I retire indoors to the more conventional lamp. In some ways I am getting to know our younger sisters better through their letters than I would if they lived near, so there are benefits in distance as well, I suppose, but I do miss you all.

I am sorry that I will not be able to attend Maria Leonard's wedding to Mr Lowe. Henry is acquainted with Mr Lowe through his role at the Wagga Wagga Advertiser and speaks well of him and I am sure Mr Elworthy knows him too. Father said in his last letter that his daughters seem intent of marrying into all the country newspapers in the colony and he has told Matilda and Alice that they must only allow the suit of men with ink on their hands.

The Express is exceeding even Henry's expectations and he very pleased with the way things are progressing here. We increase the copies printed each week and we rarely find we have any left over and there has been some tentative inquiries for advertising from Orange and even Bathurst so we are generally very pleased with The Molong Express. Henry now does all the writing and runs the business and his brother John the compositing and the back office duties, so Henry is seen as the more senior partner. His brother is of a more pessimistic nature and finds fault more often than not, but is also a perfectionist with his work, so we are grateful for that and Henry knows how to placate him when his moods are difficult, so they muddle along well together.

John's wife is a long suffering woman who is dominated by her husband and although she is kind and sweet, I have little patience with martyrdom in any form and so for the good of the business and family relations, I hold my tongue whenever we are together.

Did you see that in Boston, they have used Mr Bell's new device to despatch news by telephone to another town in Massachusetts? I wonder how long it will be before such a device is available here. How good it would be to hear your voice tonight, though I have always found something alluring in pen and ink. It is nice to be able to go back and re-read a letter, as many times as you want and look for all the meanings and hidden themes beneath what the writer is saying. I suppose Mr Bell cannot do that with his telephone but the convenience probably has many uses in this fast and hectic world.

Please give little Edith a kiss from her Aunt who may have some similar news of her own to impart soon. However, as the baby will not arrive until NEXT Christmas, I thought I would keep it to myself a little longer, as in this town, propriety dictates a woman with child should not indulge in all the activities she normally would. Such nonsense really and if it were not for this fledgling paper I might flaunt tradition, but unfortunately I am at the mercy of the town's merchants and farmers who provide us with an income, so I must do my best to behave as expected. Thank goodness for corsets!

Your affectionate sister,

Marion



Gidley Street
Molong
7 June 1877

Mr Henry Leathem
C/- Mrs John Leathem
27A Selwyn Street
Paddington

My dearest Henry

Your telegram arrived just as we were sitting down to another dinner so I had no choice but to explain to the children the reasons for your sudden departure yesterday to Sydney.

I am sorry I am not with you to share your grief, dearest, but I am pleased that your stepmother can lean on you at this time when she must be sick with her own sadness over your father's death. How happy I am that we at least had his company last month for a few days.

Your brother called in after dinner, on his way back from the newspaper, being in receipt of the same news and feeling guilty that he had not travelled with you at the first news of your father's illness.

After he had calmed down a little, I tried to explain that a business requires input on different levels and that the editorials and news could be written by me in your absence but that the production needed his guidance and he had no option but to stay and ensure the Express went out on time. He will travel down to Sydney tomorrow after we go to print, and will probably arrive before this letter, although I do not want to entrust its delivery to him in his present state, so I am relying on the mail instead.

I think your father saw the Molong Express as a continuation of his own career through the medium of his sons and I know he was very proud of you both, but he always saw you as the leader who could be relied upon to make your dreams come to fruition. Your stepmother often wrote of his pride in you and all that you have achieved, and lamented that your father was not able to

express that pride when she knew you and John both craved his approval. I am pleased you were able to spend some time with your father at the end, as I am sure your presence would have been a great comfort to him.

I wish I could stand by you at your father's funeral, but as that cannot be, know that you have my love and support and rest easy in the knowledge that I and the apprentice will handle any newspaper business until you return. I have in fact today had a promise from Mr Cotter the stonemason for advertising next month. He seemed undeterred to be discussing business with a woman and I feel sure he will be a regular advertiser.

Dearest Henry, I love you with all my heart and trust that you will have God's guidance in assisting your stepmother and your younger siblings as you bury your father, but please also take some time to rest and eat well. You are always such a strength for me and the children and now your stepmother, that I fear we sometimes forget you too are human with the same needs and weaknesses as the rest of us.

I need you to keep well Henry. You are the sun around which we all rotate and I could not bear to be without you, dear. With you beside me I can face anything for I know I have your love. I know you must stay in Paddington for a while, but please hurry home as soon as you can. No day I spend on my own seems complete and my nights are empty without you beside me. I will save my words and love for your return but know that my heart beats truly for you and each morning I wake to the happy knowledge that forever, we have each other.

Alice has been inconsolable, so worried about how sad you might be at losing your father and asked me to enclose her letter with mine. It is a sweet and touching letter for a child of nine and she wrote every word herself.

I will write to your stepmother separately tomorrow, but tonight I needed to write only to you. It is only in the presence of death that we realise how precious the living are to us and I want you to know that you are the most precious being in my life.

Always, darling, your

Marion



Molong
12 January 1878

Dr and Mrs W Large
"Chillingly",
Kincaid Street
Wagga Wagga

My dear father and mother,

I wanted to acquaint you with the fact that I was delivered of a son yesterday morning. He is a fine sturdy little chap and looks a lot like his brother Charles when he was born, so you may imagine the likeness even though you do not have the benefit of seeing him. He is strong and healthy, gave me little trouble and weighs twelve pounds and two ounces, by the kitchen scales, no other means of weighing being available to us. We have named him Frederick Percy for no one in particular but we think it is a name which will wear well.

Mrs Boucher the midwife was most attentive, although by the time she arrived, young Frederick had too, so I hope we will have no dispute about her bill when it arrives. I am quite well and will go downstairs tomorrow, although Alice seems to have taken over the reins of the house and seems happier to keep me out of the kitchen, a condition I quite enjoy.

Nellie is so wilful and heedless that I despair of her. I fear that no amount of punishment will cure her of her recklessness and she will tear around like a small duststorm, even though we have had to bandage up many a scraped knee from her tumbles.

Charles is intrigued by the workings of the printing press and we have had occasion to slap his hand many times for fear of him catching his fingers. He is already a useful addition to the Express office and helps his father fetching ink and carrying blocks of type but although he would like to forgo his schooling and become a full time apprentice downstairs, I have told him that he must attain the age of 14 before he can commence an apprenticeship. Mr Leatham's apprenticeship started at age 12 but I feel that another two years

of schooling is important, especially in this town where we do not have the benefit of an institution with your superior teaching skills, mother, but I set the children lessons after school to broaden their thinking and increase their knowledge of things not taught here.

Perhaps in a year or two I will establish my own school in Molong. I think there would be a lot of parents who would avail themselves of the service, but unfortunately there is no building big enough available at present, though I am hopeful of the hall at the end of the street becoming vacant at the end of this year, so we will see. With the paper nearly in profit, I feel I can extend my own ambitions.

William and Jack are both growing up nicely. I believe Jack will be tallest of the children and he has the lean and wiry build of his father. William and he are great friends despite the age difference and spend much time in the construction of complicated tracks and tunnels in the dirt pile at the bottom of the garden. I thought this interest in the earth might lead to some further accomplishments in the vegetable garden, but William is more inclined to keep pulling up the carrot plants to see how well they were growing, so they never get established. He has an inquisitive mind about all things and I have had to have Mr Leathem place a barrier across the top of the well to stop him leaning over from the top to see how far down it is to the water. Alice at one time heard him plotting with Jack about lowering him down in the bucket, to see if there are really frogs at the bottom but luckily Alice let me know before a disaster could occur.

I am happy mother that you will be coming to visit us soon and the children are very excited at the prospect of seeing their grandmother again. The move to Molong has been a successful one but the lack of proximity to family is our greatest regret. I am sorry father that you cannot also attend us but I understand how busy you are and how much the people of the district need your services. I thought the position at the hospital would mean less time travelling around the district and less hours in surgery, but as my own husband hardly ever rests, I take this as the lot of men who choose to follow the profession they love.

I am also gladdened by the news that Cecelia is to remarry. She has promised to bring Mr Williamson for a visit after their marriage and I look forward to embracing her again and meeting her new husband who has expressed a desire to see how we run our paper, being a newspaper man himself. It seems the sisters are all following your advice father in their choice of marriage partners.

Mr Leathem sends his very best regards and the children send their love. I am counting the days until the fifteenth when we will see you. We will be waiting to meet your coach in Orange.

Your loving daughter

Marion



8 JULY 1879

DR WILLIAM LARGE

WAGGA WAGGA HOSPITAL

HENRY GRAVELY ILL WITH PNEUMONIA STOP DOCTORS
STRUGGLING STOP PLEASE ADVISE BEST TREATMENT BY RETURN
STOP I AM DESPERATE STOP LOVE

MARION



Henry Vale Leathem.

OBIT. JULY 9, 1879, .ETAT 38 YEARS.

"Oh. for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still."
TENNYSON.

HENRY Vale Leathem, the subject of this notice, was editor and part proprietor of the MOLONG.EXPRESS, which paper he so conducted by his honest impartiality as to secure the goodwill of all. By his death his family have lost a most loving husband and affectionate father. In his friendships he was sincere, and his public life was above suspicion. An undisguised scorner of cant,

hypocrisy and injustice, he caused himself to be loved, for his most honourable, gentlemanly, and blameless life.

His funeral took place July 10, and notwithstanding the weather was dismal, an immense concourse assembled to do honour to the memory of their friend, The procession was truly representative, embracing as it did the mayor and aldermen, members of medical and legal professions, bankers, magistrates, the wealthy landowners of the district, and last, though not least, the large number of those who had walked miles on that sad day, that they might pay their last tribute of respect to the memory of one whose fine broad sympathies were all their own. The Oddfellows, of 'which society the deceased was a member, proceeded the hearse, and so, sadly and silently, we reached the grave. After the sublime service of the English Church had been very impressively read by the Reverend Dalrymple, Brother. G. Hughes, of the deceased's society, read clearly and with much emotion a prayer, the brethren clasping hands over the grave of their late Brother now so lowly laid. All was now over, and, sorrowing and dispirited, the large concourse dispersed with profound grief. We all remembered the kindly smile, the friendly extended hand, and cheery voice of the friend that had passed away, but we still had comfort, for we knew the grand sentiments our friend had uttered on earth would in due season bear their fruit, and we were comforted, for we know our departed friend, who was a good man on earth, had won his well-merited rest with his, God in Heaven.

Australian Town and Country Journal Sydney
19th July 1879



Henry Vale Leathem – 1842-1879
Inscribed on back “For Marion”



Gidley Street
Molong
12 July 1879

My dear father and mother

How I wish you were here with me tonight. I never thought I would have to bury my husband.

Henry went to Larras Lake with a number of his friends to the opening of the new school. He was to write an account of it for the paper. The first I knew he was ill was when three gentlemen brought him home and Dr Ross was with them. He was so drawn and grey and every breath was a struggle for him and it took three of us to get his clothes off and into bed.

Dr Ross feared it was bronchitis but he deteriorated so quickly that I suspected pneumonia before the doctor did. That terrible rasping deep in his chest and that struggle for breath and all the time thinking I should have insisted he stay home that night when I knew he had a cold, but I was preoccupied with the children and Henry did not seem so unwell at dinner I could convince him to stay.

The doctor and I worked over him till after midnight and your telegram arrived advising we try sulphur but Dr Ross had none with him and there was none at the hospital. Mr Hasemer from the store brought some to the house but Dr Ross said it was too late and that only God had the power to save Henry.

I thought all the children were asleep when Henry was brought home, but Alice came quietly into the room when she heard him coughing and saw Dr Ross and me leaning over him and when I looked up I had not time to hide my own fear. Immediately she began to weep and I had to take her from the room so she would not distress Henry, when all the time I understood exactly how she felt and envied her the relief of tears.

After I had calmed her, she asked if she could sit quietly by her father's side and so that is how we passed the night, she on one side holding his hand, me on the other bathing his forehead and the doctor working furiously to fight the enemy which would finally take my dear husband away from me forever.

As I sat there, I wondered how I could face the world if anything happened to Henry and I felt that God would not be so unfair. But as the night wore on and the crisis came, the doctor looked so sorrowful that both Alice and I were afraid to look at each other for fear of seeing the inevitable in each other's eyes. Henry's brother John arrived a little before dawn and the doctor told him he should say his goodbyes before I could remove Alice from the room. Dear mother and father, the look on the child's face will haunt me till the day I die. It was at once both an accusation when I had said he would be well and the grief of all the children of the ages who have lost a father. She composed herself and started to brush his hair, something she does for wee Nellie when she is unsettled and it seemed to have the same calming effect on Henry, for a while his face lost that rigid anguish of pain and took on the calm and gentle mantle it usually wore. I hope that Alice will carry that peaceful and gentle image with her through the days to come.

As the younger children began to wake, they came looking for us so I took them down to breakfast and pretended as well as I could that Henry was just a little ill so as not to alarm them. Mercifully, my sister in law arrived and took control of the situation, taking the little ones to her house. Before she left she took both my hands in her own and kissed my cheek and this simple act of kindness brought me to tears which I had to control before coming back to Henry's side.

Shortly after dinner, Henry became very lucid and gave me succinct directions on the Express, right down to an order for ink which he was to place today, and I thought he was getting better, but then he suddenly deteriorated and the doctor advised the children should be brought in to say their goodbyes. I do not think I have ever felt so helpless. Charles and William were uncertain of what to do, but little Nellie climbed upon to the bed, as is her wont, and nestled her head on Henry's chest. At first the doctor thought the pressure would hurt him, but from his near coma, he raised his arm and put it around her little shoulders in the gesture of familiarity and we all sat around the bed, touching hands and holding back our tears until we realised that the room was very still and the silence was in fact because Henry had stopped breathing. Henry had slipped away from us so quickly and so quietly but surrounded by his children and his wife and all of our combined love.

Nellie became aware of the silence first and lifted her head and said, with childlike intuition, "where has daddy gone?", and began tapping his face to make him wake up from that last sleep. I drew her away and into my arms but all the time the look on her little face was of not understanding how this

could be. In fact, we all sat silently except for Nellie's little voice and then Alice, dear Alice, started to weep, silently, just tears running down her face and dripping onto Henry's hand, and the boys realised what had happened and started to sob too, and engulfed in all this grief, I could not control my own emotions and we all held each other and wept for what seemed a very long time. Nellie kept trying to open Henry's eyes, thinking it was a game they always played when he has a nap, so I gathered her to me and tried to explain that he had died. If I live to be one hundred, the sadness of that moment will not lessen. I felt as if we were the survivors left in the lifeboat after the captain had drowned and for a short time, I wondered if it might not be better to die than try to live my life without my dear husband, but the children were all looking to me for direction and I realised that from now on, every decision in our lives will have to be made by me alone and for the first time in my life, I felt so afraid.

The funeral will be held tomorrow so it will all be over by the time you receive this but I needed to feel you were close to me tonight to share this sadness. I wish I were a child who could be comforted and cossetted and told everything is all right, for I look to the future with such fear and dread. When the undertaker called tonight to discuss the funeral tomorrow, he had me sign some papers and at the bottom under my signature, he wrote the word 'widow'. I was so angry with him, for having so boldly confirmed my status, that I asked him to leave and for the first time in my life, slammed the door behind him.

Dear mother and father, please pray for me and my children that God may give me the strength to guide them through tomorrow and the rest of our lives.

I had not realised how much I loved Henry, though he was the centre of our small world, until I knew I would never hold him again.

I feel so desolate.

I love you with all my heart

Marion



**Believed to be a photo of John Ebbs Leathem
– and his wife, also named Marian,
taken in Orange.**

**John started the Molong Express with his
brother Henry Vale Leathem in 1876.**



Gidley Street
Molong
18 July 1879

Mrs John Williamson
Gurwood Street
Wagga Wagga

My dearest sister Cecelia,

It was only a few years ago that I was writing to you offering you all my worldly wisdom on how you should run your life after you had lost your husband so tragically to fever. I realise now how arrogant I must have been to presume I knew so much about what was right for you. Please forgive me if my words hurt you at the time. I understand now that you do not truly know the plight of another until you live in their skin and I have been hurt by the well-meaning words of many people who have tried to console me but have instead cut me to the quick with their presumptions and suggestions. The second worst thing about being a widow is enduring all the visitors who feel that their presence will in some way fill the gap left by your husband's death.

Henry's funeral was a grand procession of carriages and horses and people on foot, for our cemetery is almost a mile from the town centre and it was raining. The children came, all except little Frederick who stayed with my sister in law, for I believe as mother taught us, that children should face the reality and fragility of life as early as possible. As the Rev. Dalrymple said the prayer of interment, I could not look up at those gathered to farewell my husband, for fear of losing control when I felt I had to be so strong for the children. I longed to be a child myself and wished for father's embrace to comfort me, but he and mother and you are all so far away from me now that the distance served to help my resolve and I conducted myself with some outward dignity if not inner calm.

Afterwards when all had gathered at the house, the new councillor whom Henry helped elect, Alderman Tanner, made a speech about the contribution Henry had made to the town and how the Express has become the voice for all of us who live here. As he spoke, I realised how much I did not know

about my husband and his business and I felt afresh the loss of his death, not only for myself but for this town and I vowed I would do everything possible to keep The Molong Express in print for Henry's sake. I cannot tell you the strength I gathered from that thought and I lifted my head and got through the farewells and condolences with a calm face and dry eyes.

The children are now all in bed and as I sit here at my desk I realise I am delaying going to bed for fear of the empty room. Last night Nellie slept with me but tonight for the first time since my marriage, I am on my own. I thought about coming home to mother and father, but Wagga has never been my home and there is no reason to go back to Tumut with no family there. There is nothing for me to do at Gundagai but sit in a rented cottage, call on old acquaintances and care for the children and I see that as a defeat of sorts. Molong has become our home and the children are part of the community and we have friends here now. I think we have all put down little roots and I see no reason to add to any of our grief by leaving all that is familiar. I do not intend to compound the calamity of Henry's death by taking a step backward.

I pray to God for the strength to get through the next few days until I can gather my thoughts and make some decisions about our future. I cannot tell you how heavily this responsibility lies on me tonight. It is so intense that it almost drives my thoughts of sadness away. But I'm not sure which is worse - the sadness or the worry of what our future will be.

I miss you tonight and your good common sense but writing to you allows me to commune with your spirit even though I do not have your physical presence. Tonight the world seems a difficult and dangerous place and I do not ever recall feeling that way before. A part of me wants to be with Henry and forget all these responsibilities, I have never known death to be so inviting but tonight it seems like an escape. I grieved so much when our dear brothers passed away, for they too were young, but I felt the need to go on. But the death of my husband has left me without a rudder and I feel lost.

Pray for me tonight and all the nights to come, for the strength to continue and do the best for my children.

I miss you and love you dear sister and I am glad in my heart that you have found another man to love you and spend a lifetime with you. I can not see myself ever loving anyone else again for I think I know that no one would ever love me as much as Henry. In some ways I feel my life is spent.

With love, your sister

Marion



Riddell Street
Molong
19 July 1879

Dr William Large
"Chillingly"
Kincaid Street
Wagga Wagga

Dearest father,

Your letter arrived today and your words made me feel like a little girl again, comforted and safe in the arms of her parent. And in that safe and cossetted place, for the first time since Henry's death, I have felt able to cry and not be ashamed of my tears.

I knew you would understand how I was feeling, even though you are not here to guide me and offer your usual good advice.

I did think Henry was invincible, for you see he never let any obstacle stop him when he was determined to cross it and illness seemed such a small hurdle. He always achieved what he set out to do, ignoring the detractors and opinions, which would stop another, lesser man. I suppose I have been tricked by that philosophy, believing Henry not as vulnerable as the rest of us, for you see if Henry became ill or died, what would become of me? Our love was so strong and we shared every idea. He was my confidant as I was his and he treated me as an equal in all things. I am so angry that his wonderful camaraderie has been taken from me, for without his belief, what am I now, but another grieving widow, frightened of the future.

When your letter arrived today I was writing replies to all those who have written kind and loving words about Henry. The more I read the letters the more I realised how much I had lost. I felt almost defeated, as if my life were over, for I had lost my perspective and a sense of my own self.

But when I read your dear, believing letter, I felt a sense of hope for the first time this week.

When I was little you would let me help you in the surgery or send me on errands because you believed I could look after myself and ride as well as the boys. I know mother hated it when you took me to patients who had been injured, to assist you in their surgery, but your faith in me made me overcome any natural squeamishness and I could hold together wounds while you stitched them closed or even take the dead child from the arms of a mother while you consoled her. Because you believed in me, I believed in myself and I felt some of that old spirit returning today as I read your words and when I laid down the page I felt a sense of hope, which no amount of prayer has been able to bring about. Thank you for showing me how to have faith in myself again.

I will gather myself now and go to the children. I have been frightened by the fear and sadness in their faces, not recognising until now that they are mirroring my own emotions and I have not known how to comfort them, but I see now that they need to see my strength to realise that all is not lost. Thank you for helping me remember that I am capable of such strength.

I miss you so much father. I felt you have always understood me and loved me and I wanted you to know your letter will sustain me in the days ahead as much as your presence did when I was a child.

Thank you for believing in me and helping me find the feisty young girl I used to be. I love you with all of my heart.

Your loving daughter

Marion



The Molong Express
20 July 1879
Mr Henry Parkes

"Kenilworth"
Johnston Street
Annandale

Dear Mr Parkes

I write to thank you for your very kind and heartfelt note of condolence regarding the death of my husband.

I must admit that I was comforted by the tone and obvious sincerity in your affection for my husband and his ability as a newspaperman.

Henry's apprenticeship with you at the Empire was a source of pride to him and he often talked about what he learnt from you and your staff as a measure for how our own newspaper should run. When the Express was first published, I recall Henry making sure a copy was posted to you as a mark of respect and I remember his pride at your letter of congratulation, which is framed and hangs on the wall of the Express office just above this desk where I write.

Henry was only thirty six when he died, but in those few years he achieved much more than most men do with their full allotted span. My husband's greatest quality was that he never bore ill feelings to those who had wronged him. Henry forgave all people and never let past anguish guide his decisions. It is a quality that at first frustrated me, but I came to see that more can be achieved by moving forward without the burden of past regrets and I have embraced that philosophy.

I understand you have some guilt about Henry's time with you when he was an apprentice, in that it may have had a long term effect on his health, but let me assure you Henry held you in great respect and that is evidenced by any editorial where he reported your achievements.

Henry was above all a fair man and I am sad that his children will not see the capability he could achieve if he had been allowed to live. I will do my best to keep his memory alive for them and let them understand the dreams he had for our future, even though he may not be alive to see that success.

I thank you for offering to help find a buyer for The Express but rest assured that I have no intention of letting control of the paper go to anyone who does not understand the effort involved in its birth. As long as I am capable, The Express will remain in Leathem hands and I have every intention of ensuring its success.

I understand from your letter that you will be travelling through Molong in the next month and I extend an invitation to dine with us. I would class time

spent with you as an exclusive interview for the paper regarding your thoughts on the development of the colony on the western side of the Blue Mountains.

I also wish you success in your campaign to capture Ned Kelly, for it is an area where I agree with your sentiments entirely, although around the district here he is regarded as something of a hero. I suppose as the majority of his supporters are Irish Catholics, that is to be expected, persecution being a badge of honour and a birth rite for so long. Being Irish myself, from a very different background, I would prefer to look at the admirable works of my fellow countrymen who have used their ability for good and added to the progress of the colony, rather than a scoundrel on a stolen horse who professes to be some modern day Robin Hood.

I look forward to meeting you again and thank you again for providing me with some new memories of Henry's life in the days before I met him. In some men, their greatness cannot be eclipsed simply by their death and to me, Henry was one of the finest men ever born.

I remain, most respectfully yours,

Mrs. Marion Leathem



The Molong Express
3 August 1879

Mr James Elworthy

Gundagai Times
Gundagai

Dear James

Thank you very much for your compassionate and solicitous letter.

Henry had achieved so much these past three years and although his brother has worked alongside him, I know that the success of the paper has

been due to Henry's determination and resilience. His brother John would have given up on any number of occasions and many has been the night that Henry has had to counsel John to keep him from packing up and leaving town. Although John has been involved from the start, the town has seen Henry as the voice of The Express and its lifeblood.

Over supper yesterday, John advised me he would take over the paper until a new partner could be found or the paper sold, but I told him that now that Henry was dead, I would take over his role at the Express. The look, which passed between John and his wife, spoke volumes but when the office opens on Monday morning, I will be at Henry's desk and John will have no reason to doubt my determination.

I thank you, James for having faith in my ability. I often wondered if you knew how much of the editorial I wrote when we lived at Gundagai. Henrietta suggested once or twice that some term or phrase used in the Times was something I would say, but I thought she only suspected Henry had picked up a particular way of speaking from me, during our marriage.

I feel sure there will be disagreements with Henry's brother over how the paper should be run and of course my sister in law will need to side with her husband no matter what her real opinion. However, I was my husband's greatest confidant and know the true story about the many mishaps in the starting up phase and the ongoing running of the paper and I am determined we will succeed.

Your warm words have been a bright spot in an otherwise bleak time and I feel encouraged by your confidence. Henry regarded you as his best friend and advisor and since you are both my brother in law and my friend, I hope that you will not mind if I call on you in the same capacity. If only for pride, I must make the Express succeed, I will not even discuss the financial necessity of a viable newspaper for my family, but I know you have had your own difficulties in the early years and overcome them. I hope that I am at least as resilient.

I thank you also for the advice and assistance you give my parents. Mother says that yours is the only advice father will take, but I know she is concerned about their financial situation and father's increasing debility. This is another reason I must make this paper a success, I cannot be a burden on them when they have so much to bear at present and I am so far away.

Thank you for your support today and for the advice I might need from you in the days ahead.

With fond regards,

Marion Leathem



Molong Express
Riddell Street
Molong
18 November 1879

Dr and Mrs W Large
"Chillingly",
Kincaid Street
Wagga

My dearest mother and father,

I have been writing down the events around the escapades of Captain Moonlight for tomorrow's paper and notice in the telegraphic communication it says he shot and killed Constable Webb Bowen at McGlede's hut yesterday.

I remember Constable Webb-Bowen from his days in Tumut when he used to assist father with his sheriff duties and I am saddened to hear of his death at the hands of that criminal Andrew Scott, who masquerades as a local hero.

It is interesting that in this country, founded on a penal system, bushrangers are treated with respect and the police are considered villains. In this district, there are any number of places considered safe houses for the local criminals and everyone, including the police seem to know about them, but nothing is done. Ned Kelly is supposed to have a safe house in Bathurst and is planning, so says local gossip, to rob one of the banks in that town. He appears to taunt Henry Parkes with his antics and Mr Parkes always rises to the bait.

Anyway, I have written my condolences to Mrs Webb-Bowen, I suppose she still lives in Tumut.

We have great excitement in Molong this week as Mr Bellerby, one of our local businessmen, applied to council to erect a street light outside his premises to enable his customers to not injure themselves when they leave his store in the evening. The new council have also promised to proceed with paved streets and footpaths in the village, so the dangers of walking about after dark should be greatly reduced. I do not suppose we will have street lights along the length of the main street for a while yet, but it is gratifying to see this progress. We are starting to be quite grown up.

At the council meeting last night, which I was recording for the paper, they paid tribute to Henry and his brother for their efforts and presented me with a plaque to hang on the office wall. They followed this with a minute's silence for Henry's memory and afterwards, great applause for his work. Henry's brother did not attend, for reasons known only to himself!

These small remembrances warm my heart. It is a reassurance that the town will not forget Henry's input into Molong and I am gratified that his work was valued.

I hope that your health is improving father and that you will soon be able to resume your duties at the hospital. James Elworthy wrote he was travelling to Wagga Wagga to visit next week with Henrietta and the children. I know that you are having some difficulties at present and I urge you to listen to Mr Elworthy's advice on all things financial, for he is a successful businessman and a practical thinker. If Tumut is where you need to go for your health father, understand there is no disgrace in returning to where you are known and respected. I'm sure many of your old patients would welcome you back enthusiastically. Mr Elworthy has offered to assist you with the move and in securing a residence and office from which to practice. I urge you to take his advice.

I will await your next letter with interest.

Your loving daughter,

Marion



The Molong Express
30 November 1879

Mr William Tanner
Molong

Dear Mr Tanner

I wish to offer you my congratulations on your becoming mayor of our town. As a resident of three years now I am excited that our town has developed into a community complete with a dedicated council to guide it through this formative stage.

I would like to offer the Molong Express as a vehicle for the council to project plans and visions to the people of the area and I promise you will always have access to our press for notices of importance to this community.

The future of this town rests in the hands of the people it has voted to represent it and both the Molong Express and I wish you every success in your first term as the first mayor of Molong.

Yours respectfully

(Mrs) Marion Leathem

Co Proprietress



Gidley Street
Molong
7 January 1880

Dr and Mrs W Large
"Chillingly"

Kincaid Street
Wagga Wagga

My dearest mother and father

There seems so little time to sit and write letters these days but as the mail leaves tomorrow I wanted to send you a few words to let you know that you are in my thoughts, and to wish you a happy and prosperous New Year and new decade.

I know you and father worry about me being here in Molong on my own with the children, but rest assured we are all muddling along as well as can be expected, though with a sense of something dearly familiar missing from our hearts. The children all have their small tasks to perform and are good and kind to each other. They know the task I have taken on and do their best to help me in their various ways, though Nellie washing my best woollen shawl in the rainwater tank with soft soap was not a great success.

To me the Express is another child, which deserves the same care and attention it demands, for a job well done.

You may call me stubborn, but with Henry gone, my moments of loneliness can be more quickly overcome by writing the news and sorting the letters to the editor than by any bout of self-indulgence and I think the town respects that I was not someone who needed to have a man by my side to survive. I almost believe it my duty to show Alice and Nellie that no woman should ever assume that she is safe and secure just because she is married. And I intend they shall know how to make their own way in the world, just as you taught us.

In the three years since we have been in Molong, I thought I had found the respect of the local people and assumed they knew how much I also contribute to the Express. It was a shock therefore to be reminded each day, by well-meaning men and less well-meaning women that the trades are no place for a woman and perhaps I should sell the venture to someone with 'experience'. I cannot tell you how I have to hold back my anger at such remarks, and you will be surprised to know that I do.

I have at many times thought of taking up your option and opening a school in this district, for such an institution is sorely needed, but why should I bow to the expectations of the town when I already have a perfectly sound

business? I am looking forward to the day when the important personages of this town acknowledge my ability, including Dr Ross who, though supportive of the Express in the early days, now seems to find pleasure in writing letters of a caustic nature aimed at my incompetence and lack of knowledge of politics and local affairs. To gain respect from this man alone will assist me in winning the respect of the town and it my intention to do just that very thing.

Anyway, pardon my vitriol, but my standing as a person of competence is questioned so often, purely because of my sex, that I have become more sympathetic to the suffragettes who openly campaign for the right to be accepted and compete on equal terms.

Although I scarcely have enough hours in the day to carry out the tasks I have allotted me, I like to answer your letters as promptly as I can, even if I cannot these days write the newsy epistles of the past, so that the lifeline you provide is not in any way severed by time and distance. Although I am strong and determined that we shall succeed here, there are moments when I miss your proximity and the comfort your words always provide, so please know that nothing you say can be anything other than a reassurance and comfort to

your loving and respectful daughter

Marion



Gidley Street
Molong
5 February 1880

Mrs J Elworthy
First Avenue
Gundagai

My dearest sister Henrietta

The children are in bed, the bread is set and this week's proofs have been checked and are ready for print, so I am free to write to you.

Before my husband died, this time of night belonged to us both. We would sit here in the parlour after the children had settled and talk through the events of the day. When we first came to Molong, our conversations were monopolised by the Express and all matters concerning its progress but we often found time to laugh and share interesting pieces of news and I always enjoyed Henry's accounts of the people in our town and the clients who had come to see him in the week – he had a sense of the ridiculous that gave any person or occasion a witty twist. Now that he is gone, I miss that camaraderie and I miss the laughter – it seems when Henry died the laughter died too.

My home tonight is peopled with all those I have loved and who are no longer on this earthly plane but who gather around me in these quiet times, almost as if they know my plight. At this time of night I succumb to long conversations in my head, mainly with Henry but also with our dear brothers Godfrey and William who were little more than children when they died. I gather strength from the imagined conversation that we share and go to bed feeling I have indulged in good company.

I often find myself telling Henry about the events of the day, particularly those to do with the paper. By asking his opinion I can often find a reasonable solution to a problem which has eluded me for days and this has happened so often that I wonder if I really have his council or whether, because I have no option but to rely on my own wits, I am looking for justification for my resolutions.

I suppose that after being able to rely on Henry's guidance these past ten years, my own intuition has become a little rusty, but each day I find the decisions become easier to make and my brother in law's resistance to my opinions less justified. I find it very satisfying to be proved right in business matters and John is often annoyed that the compositors and apprentices come to me for advice before they go to him, but they know I will give them a fair hearing where he is predisposed to object to almost any suggestion of change on principle.

I see little of my sister in law at present for I am so fully occupied in the office, and I supposed she may be avoiding me because of these day to day conflicts with her husband, but this morning early I found a covered basket on my doorstep when I arose, containing a pot of crab apple jelly and some freshly baked scones, with a little posy of flowers. I recognised my sister in law's writing on the jar, so was touched by her kindness, even if she cannot outwardly support me.

This letter contains little of anything else but the Express however it is such an overriding part of my life, there seems time for little else, so thank you for letting me air my grievances to you. I feel much better for being able to tell someone.

The children are well albeit missing their father, but not with the fierce grief of before. I wish I had their resilience. I thank God for them daily because they sustain me now with their laughter and their love. What would life be without children?

Thank you for letting me use this medium as a way to hold a conversation with someone I miss so much.

Keep well dear sister. My love to James and the children.

Your loving sister

Marion Leathem





Molong Express
17 February 1880

Mr Frederick T. Wimble
Wimbles Printing Supplies
Bourke Street
Melbourne

Dear Sir

We have received today your letter stating that you are unable to supply us ink as you have heard that my husband, Mr Henry Leathem has passed away and you are concerned about your own payment in the light of his widow attempting to take over the business, your words sir, certainly not my own.

My husband tragically did die from pneumonia some eight months ago, but you may rest assured that the paper is being run as efficiently as it was during his life and in fact since his death we have increased our circulation and our revenue from advertising.

My husband, as you may know, worked for Mr Parkes at the Empire and Mr Elworthy at the Gundagai Times before starting this business. His experience was substantial and he brought all that knowledge to Molong to open the Express in 1876. As this is the country and experienced labour difficult to find, I worked besides my husband and quickly learned all there is to know about newspapers in country towns, to assist him with its production. In fact, as editor and co-proprietor since his death, I have been congratulated on the high standard of the paper, the quality of its content and the promptness of its circulation by a great many people and I therefore find your inference that your bills will be left unpaid a great insult.

I have consulted with my brother in law James Elworthy and have secured the names of other suppliers of ink and product in Sydney and assure you, that although we prefer to work with Wimbles ink, we can obtain a substitute at a lesser price.

You may like to reconsider your opinion on supplying the Molong Express and I hope to have a favourable reply from you, along with the supplies we have ordered, by the end of next week, otherwise you may consider our business arrangement terminated.

Yours sincerely

(Mrs.) Marion Leathem

Co-Proprietress and Editor



The Molong Express
3 March 1880

Mr Frederick T. Wimble
Wimbles Printing Supplies
Bourke Street
Melbourne

Dear Sir,

I was pleased to receive your letter today by express delivery, along with the ink and other supplies we ordered.

Regarding your comments, I perhaps did misconstrue your words, but as you will understand a woman in business, and in particular the printing industry, is somewhat a peculiarity in this colony. But I am sure you will not be surprised to hear that in England and America there are many women who, trusting the security of their own endeavours and intelligence over the uncertain bonds of matrimony, have succeeded admirably.

I trust that now you understand my position, we can continue to do business on the same basis as before and maintain a relationship which is beneficial to both parties.

Although I was born in Ireland and came to Australia as a child, I believe strongly in this country and all it has to offer and I appreciate the roles of

those who labour in the bush to maintain themselves and their families. As you are ensconced to the city, you perhaps do not understand the significance of the weekly news to the isolated individuals in the small communities of New South Wales, whereas I do, having lived in country towns most of my life. Any delay in producing a newspaper is akin to cutting off their lines of supply, for I believe that news does as much to sustain life in the bush as food and water and I am determined that the people of this district, who went for so long without any but the most erratic distribution of newspapers, some many months old, will not suffer that fate again.

I am most pleased this unhappy incident has been resolved and I accept your gracious apology. If indeed you are traveling through this area at any time, you are most welcome to come to the Express office and see how we do things in this part of the world. I remain, sir,

Yours respectfully

(Mrs) Marion Leathem

Co-Proprietress and Editor



Gidley Street
Molong
15 June 1880

Dr and Mrs W Large
Richmond Street
Tumut

Dearest mother and father,

The tone of your last letter was so filled with worry and concern that I felt I must write straight away to put your mind at rest and let you know that I am faring quite well now.

The frustration of battling the most trite issues based only on my status as a woman is ongoing. You brought us up to believe there was no difference in

the ability of either gender, but it seems most other people do not have that enlightened view.

If I were a man, I would not be treated so shabbily and I regret to say that my main detractors are the women of this town, whom I once regarded as equals and confidants. Mrs Bell commented to another woman on Tuesday at the testament address for the new schoolteacher, that if I had really respected my husband I would have put aside my ambitions of being a 'newspaper woman' for the same length of time I wear mourning and stayed away from such social events!

I explained that decorum does not put food on the table and that even in our small town, fare-welling the local school teacher hardly ranks as a social highlight and I was there in any case to report on the event for the paper. Perhaps Mrs Bell might understand the mightiness of the pen when she reads my description of her most unbecoming outfit on the evening, next Saturday, in our Social Mems column and hold her tongue in future.

There is a whispering campaign against me, which I try to ignore, but when it comes to lack of advertising and my competence being questioned, I'm afraid that every fibre of my being rises to the challenge.

I do this by being quite distant in my dealing with the advertisers. Indeed, the more haughty my demeanour, the better my acceptance. If I appear too friendly, the gentlemen of this town especially think that I am soft in the head and speak to me in the most condescending terms and try to out do me in matters concerning finances, something they usually come to regret.

So, to succeed here at all, I have had to become a quite arrogant figure. I am slowly securing the commitment of all the Sydney businesses which were accustomed to dealing with Henry, with the exception of one or two, and being the only paper in town, I am assured of advertising by anyone who wishes to notify their wares to the citizens of Molong and the surrounding districts. Indeed, as the paper is the only lifeline to the outlying citizens I have better custom there than I do with the townspeople whom I had considered friends.

Henry's brother has been helpful in the manual work of the paper but is obstructionist in all matters of growth. John is content to set the type and run the press and although he often shows displeasure that I have taken the upper hand in the office, I think he is relieved that this side of the business has been taken away from his realm of responsibility, but every step forward requires a battle and I have little respect for his attitude.

I hope that in time we can learn to work together, because the mechanics of the paper are quite difficult and the cost for journeymen compositors is quite beyond my budget at present.

The children do not seem to be suffering too much from my absence in the home where they used to find me before Henry's death. I have adjusted my day to rising 2 hours earlier so that I can take care of the newspaper responsibilities before the children wake, which means I can spend the time over breakfast being as normal a family as we possibly can be without a father at the head of the table.

Charles talks day and night about when he grows up and runs the Express and John helps me in many ways by cleaning the type and washing down the galleys. Alice is an industrious child and has taken on the care of the baby as well, although I have hired a woman to come in each day and attend to the more domestic duties so that she may keep attending school.

You know I have always loathed the tasks which ensure the good running of a household, so it is a relief to pass over the washing and cleaning to someone else, although finding someone who can passably wash and starch a simple white collar has proved a more daunting task than meeting the deadlines of the paper. I have currently engaged a young girl from a good family, who, though inexperienced, does show some talent for learning and I am resigned to her mistakes until she can be taught properly. The benefit is that she lives nearby so can come to us each morning and return to her family at night, which gives me a little respite each evening when the children are in bed.

I am pleased that Tumut has not forgotten you and that you have been welcomed so eagerly, even by those you once put behind bars. When I see the level of the magistrates in this town at the court proceedings, I am minded again of your diligence and fairness when you acted in that capacity, I am afraid the same cannot be said for the local justice system here, but I am in no position to criticise privately or in print, just yet.

The children have planned a celebration tonight for my thirty eighth birthday, under the guidance of Alice who has banned me from the kitchen (a very easy task to endure), while she prepares the food. I am quite looking forward to it.

News from home, and I still call it home after all this time, is so welcome and sustains me as nothing else can., please write often.

With loving respect

your daughter

Marion



Agreement of Sale between Marion Wrixon Leathem and John Ebbs Leathem

Mrs Marion Wrixon Leathem to purchase from John Ebbs Leathem his share in the newspaper known as The Molong Express for the sum of eighty pounds sterling.

Amount to be paid in half yearly instalments of ten pounds for a period of four years, due on the 1st of January and the 1st July of each year until paid in full.

Mr Leathem to have no contact with the townsfolk of Molong in any way in relation to the newspaper known as The Molong Express or any other newspaper for Molong, existing or in the future.

Sale and payments are dependent upon Mr Leathem making no further disparaging remarks about Mrs Leathem or her ability as the Proprietress of The Molong Express.

Payments to be made to Bank of New South Wales account for Mr Leathem

Upon payment of the first instalment, the rights to the Molong Express will be transferred in total to Mrs Marion Leathem.

Mr Leathem will have no involvement in the business after the date of this document and will not be liable for any debts incurred after that date.

Signed this day June 30th 1880

John Ebbs Leathem
Compositor
Proprietress

Mrs Marion Leathem
Newspaper

William Tanner
Dr Andrew Ross

Mayor of Molong- witness
Doctor of Medicine- witness



9 July 1880

My darling husband,

I have no one else to whom I can write, so I write this letter to you, my dearest, my darling one whom I miss so much. Though you have gone to that place that only those loved by God can enter, you are still my ally and my confidant and I feel closer to you, though you are gone away, than I do to any living soul.

It is one year today since you left me and went ahead on your own journey, leaving me here alone to continue all we started together. There is only me now to deal with the children and the newspaper and your brother and all manner of difficult and unpleasant things, which threaten to overwhelm me and leave me feeling wretched and downhearted.

I often wonder if the events that have occurred since last July would have been any different if you were still alive. Would you be here sitting, worried over the shortfall in the accounts as I am tonight, or would your management of the Express have ensured financial prosperity. Would John have taken your advice on his affairs and not needed to declare bankruptcy and leave me to depend on journeymen to fill his role. Would the public have criticised your articles as they do mine, or is it only that I am a woman and not allowed an opinion? I am tired of the ridicule and threats and the hard work and long hours. I am tired to my bones and I am so angry at you for leaving me here alone. There is no one to reassure me and help me over these obstacles and I am losing confidence in myself. I can confide in no one and at every corner I am met with worry and uncertainty.

Some days I wish I had lay down beside you and died too, but then I feel cowardly and unworthy of the faith you had in me. I have never been a coward Henry, but some mornings I wake and hope that it is Sunday, so that I do not have to go to the office and deal with the advertisers and the affronted public and the staff. This morning I lay in bed so long that Alice came in worried, as she has never awoken in a house where I had not already been busy for several hours. Her relief was obvious, and she said, "Dear mother, I thought something had happened to you too!"

Each night I ask God for assistance but I know there is only me to complete the next day's tasks, all the while not allowing the children nor the town at large to know how worried I really am.

I cannot bother mother and father with my troubles and that precludes me from writing to any of my brothers or sisters as well, as no matter how I implore them, I know that any tribulations in our little clan are reported along the line and would eventually filter back to mother at least and do not want to worry her more. Father's health continues to decline and the financial burdens are immense. Mother is barely able to make enough from the school to pay off the loans father has accumulated and although she is stalwart and loyal I am sure she is angry that she has had no say in them attaining the level of debt they now have.

Father has always been such a good surgeon and such an honourable man that he never suspected that others would not be as honest as he, and as such he has done nothing to collect all the monies owing to him. I often wonder if we had stayed in Ireland would the fortunes of the family have been different? Father's own father, although I have never met him, was a very successful surgeon and accumulated a good deal of wealth in his lifetime. Mother's family have always known money and so until they came to Australia, it would never have been expected that mother might have to help earn a living for the family, but she is the one who has managed to support the family for most of the last ten years or so.

When I look back on the early memories of my life, it always seemed that mother was the organiser and the model for the children while father was the wise and learned dreamer with little idea of how the world actually worked. If father had not dabbled in politics and been a little more astute at his bookwork, their lives now would be so different, but the worry is taking a terrible toll on them both and I feel badly that I cannot take time to go to them at this moment, but James Elworthy at least does his best to assist father in matters relating to business and money.

I often think that if I sold the business and the house, I could return to my old life in Tumut or Wagga and live a reasonable existence, but there are so many debts that I would realise little money and now that I have tasted what it is to have the rewards of my own labours, I doubt I could settle into an existence like Cecelia or Maria where their husband's opinion and their children's health and the arrangement of flowers for dinner are the major concerns of their day. Every penny I have is caught up in this business and anything I make goes to repaying John for the foreseeable future.

I suppose what you taught me was to take the chances and be prepared to accept that defeat is only possible if I give up, and of course, I will never do that, but sometimes it would be less confronting to have someone make the decisions which I fear may eventually destroy us.

Each time I need to deal with the bank or one of the suppliers, I know that although I only tell the truth, I am omitting items, which may impact upon my circumstances. If I were in a large city, people would not know every shortcoming but in a town this size, there is no privacy so I must at all times appear to be the epitome of a successful woman. For this reason I share my doubts with no one, not even the children. The making over of old clothes they put down to my frugal upbringing and an eccentric nature, but if I have to wear the same summer bonnet this year which I have worn for the past three, I fear that not even my theories on wastefulness will sustain me. Although I have no vanity about clothes, it is expected that I dress well. Only yesterday Mrs Milne, coming down for her paper, remarked that the fabric of my dress must be very serviceable as it was wearing well after three winters. I am not sure she meant malice but what was in my heart was far from charitable.

It is a fine line I walk Henry – this bridge between ruin and survival and some days the path is so narrow that I feel I am almost on the tips of my toes to keep from falling. I seem to be the one who reassures everyone else that all will be well, but there is no one to reassure me. The fear of failure and defeat is my constant companion. Almost every day I fear opening my eyes when I wake because of what the day may bring and at night there is that same relief in sleep. Oh Henry- what am I to do? How will I ever survive, what if I am driven to something worse?

When you died you took away so much of what I need and I sometimes am thankful for the long hours of work and constant weariness as they stop me yearning for your love.

I miss you every moment of every day dearest, but tonight, on the anniversary of your death, the loneliness is unbearable.

Your Marion.



The Molong Express
Riddell Street
Molong
18 August 1880

Dr Andrew Ross
Mayor
Molong Municipal Council

Dear Dr Ross

On behalf of the Molong Express may I congratulate you in your new role as Mayor of Molong.

Both the paper and I have been honoured to assist you in attaining this position and the town is very pleased to have such a well-qualified person to guide us in growth and prosperity.

I look forward to your continued success

With great respect

(Mrs) Marion Leathem

Proprietress



Molong Express
Molong
14 November 1880

Dr William Large
Richmond Street
Tumut

Dearest father,

I know you will be surprised to see a note from me in with this week's copy of the Express, but I thought you might enjoy the account of the court proceedings we have had in Molong this week. A more ridiculous case I have yet to see and none of us know how it even made its way into the courtroom.

The theft of a goat would not normally warrant such a large amount of column space, even in The Express, but it was a quiet week and I did not think the readers would mind me indulging in a little humour. I thought of you as I was writing it and hope you enjoy this as a little respite from the difficulties around you at present.

We are all concerned about you and wish you would not dwell on what has happened. It is no disgrace in these depressed times to suffer bad debt at the hands of unscrupulous patients and no one thinks any less of you or your principles. To the contrary, they sympathise with your position and will do all they can to help you through this.

You must take your own advice and get plenty of rest and fresh air to overcome these temporary setbacks and you will soon be back at your desk administering cures to your old patients. Or perhaps you might like to visit with the children and me for a while, to meet wee Frederick and reacquaint yourself with Alice, Charles, John, William and Nellie. They would love to see you again and having your company would be as much tonic for me as it might be for you.

Please say you will come?

Your affectionate daughter

Marion



Dr William Large 1807-1881
Marion's father – Surgeon Superintendent
On the Branken Moor departed Queenstown Ireland
(Cobh) August 1841 for Port Phillip December 1841



The Molong Express
Gidley Street
Molong
22 January 1881

Mrs Cecelia Williamson
Gurwood Street
Wagga Wagga

My dearest sister Cecelia,

It is so hot here, that if you will believe me dear sister, I am writing this with my feet in the wash tin which I have filled with a ladle of cold water from the well. It is not a very dignified position, but I am expecting no callers today and have finished all my chores and as it is my day to write letters, I thought perhaps the comfort derived from this unusual action may let my letters sound a little more pleasant and cool than I might otherwise convey.

I have not known such heat in all the four and a half years I have lived in Molong. For three days now the temperature has been over one hundred degrees. The air is still, there being no breath of wind and every plant in the vegetable garden has fallen flat down in the dirt for want of water and cool relief. Although we have been watering by hand in the cool after dusk, the ground is so dry that the water leaves barely a damp patch on the surface and I'm not sure the water has any chance to get down to the roots where it is needed.

In the field, the sheep are falling over in exhaustion and many a farmer has had to kill animals who are suffering from heat distress so we are all freely supplied with mutton and lamb, but it is too hot to cook and the meat spoils so quickly. We have taken to roasting a joint early in the morning while it is still cool enough to do so and then eating cold meat for the next couple of days with whatever salad we can salvage from the garden. We all have more salt meat than we will ever consume. Butter cannot be kept firm and the milk curdles quickly so we are making custards and other puddings to use what we can. The children take it in turns fanning one another at bed time and Alice and Nellie have taken their cross stitch down to the cellar to

work, although I'm afraid they might strain their eyes by the dim light in that room, but that is preferable to heatstroke.

I had to report in the paper today that there will be no reprieve from this heat for at least a week. Old Mrs. McLean came in to see me to make sure that this was right, as she feels her husband will not survive this heat much longer, suffering as he is from consumption. I had to tell her that my words were fact, as provided by the Government office in Sydney and that I do not control the weather. She went away, crying into her handkerchief, thinking me unaccommodating for not saying there will be a change next week.

As well, there are bushfires to the west. The smoke and cinders rain down on us daily and no woman worth her reputation would put out her wash to see it covered in soot. We have mostly strung up lines in the stables and have been drying the wash there, for in this heat it is necessary to change linen daily. The young girl I engaged to assist me complains constantly about the heat, which is most aggravating when all of us are in the same situation. She is entirely too soft and I advised her today that she had best find a rich husband if she is not prepared to do the work that every woman in this country does as her due, irrespective of the temperature. She burst into tears and ran off home. I have no patience with this new delicacy of youth; their parents are far too lenient.

I had a letter from mother yesterday saying that father's health continues to deteriorate. I'm not sure that moving back to Tumut was the best thing to do as Wagga Wagga has a much larger population and mother had a better chance of running a profitable school there than in Tumut, which seems to be stagnating at the moment. Father seems no better than when he was in Wagga Wagga and mother is worried about his mental state, as the scandal of his debts is known to all and sundry in the district and mother says he will not leave the house at all. He is applying for a Certificate of Estate this week, James Elworthy is assisting him, and I hope that when this is discharged, the burden may be lifted somewhat.

Mother writes in her usual stoic manner, but I know she blames father for their circumstances and is more ashamed that they cannot repay to you, John and Richard what they owe, than she is about their outstanding debts to the storekeepers. I am sure with time that mother could work her way out of this dilemma, but she says that father's health has left him almost incapacitated and unable to go about his duties and she needs to care for him around the clock so cannot run the school herself. She refuses any idea

of approaching her family in Ireland for assistance, which I understand, but I hate to think of them living their declining years in poverty.

I desire to go down for a visit to offer father whatever consolation my presence can give, but with a weekly deadline for the Express and no one else to assist, it is an impossible idea and I see no chance of getting to Tumut for at least six months so I am grateful that at least you can see him sooner. Please hold him close for me and try to convince him to come to me for a visit. A change of scenery may be well what he needs and I know he enjoys assisting with the editorials and transcripts. Do try to convince him, it may be a remedy for his morbid state of mind.

This letter is far too long and rambling and I have not yet asked after the children and Mr Williamson, though he does ensure I receive a copy of the Wagga Wagga Evening Standard each week, for which I am grateful. I could see by the sixteen typographical mistakes this week that he has a new compositor.

My love to you all, from
your most affectionate sister,
Marion



Molong
5 June 1881

Mr Richard Large
"Kilenny"
Tumut

My dear Richard

Nothing gives me greater pleasure than to know my favourite brother will be marrying the daughter of my friend Julia Ratliff.

Mother and father will welcome this news as a brief respite from their present financial difficulties and I am sure this diversion will lift their spirits.

Please forgive me for not attending your wedding, my commitments here make it difficult to get away, but when you see all our brothers and sisters standing there beside you, look a little harder and you will see that my spirit is amongst them, wishing you all joy and love.

I trust that the enclosed gift may find a niche in your new house. Whenever you use it, please remember

your loving sister

Marion Leathem



Molong
24 July 1881

Mrs Doctor Large
Richmond Street
Tumut

Dear Mother,

I wanted to write to you separately from the letter I enclose for father.

Maria and Cecelia have both written about the deterioration of father's condition these past few months. Maria said that when he arose to speak at Richard's wedding, he seemed to forget where he was and could not remember anything he was to say. Maria also said that she noticed he was asleep at the dinner table and when she awoke him, he ambled outside and sat alone on the garden wall till John brought him in for fear he would get a chill. It is so unlike father, who loves revelry more than anyone I know, to miss a party, especially his son's wedding. I know you have mentioned his melancholy at recent events but I did not think it had affected his general health so badly and I wondered why you had not informed any of us as to his real condition.

I am writing to Henry Wrixon for advice on good doctors in Melbourne. I cannot bear to think of anything happening to father without some attempt at

intervention on our part. He has always done all in his power to help others regain their health and I feel we owe him this.

Please do not think we are meddling. We love you both and feel that there is a strain on you through father's illness as well and perhaps a trip to Melbourne may be the tonic you both need to regain your strength.

I do not think I could carry on if anything should happen to father.

With love mother

Marion.



Molong
October 28 1881

Mrs Julia Ratliff
Bethwick Street
Wagga Wagga

Dear Julia

Thank you for your letter with such heartfelt notes of sympathy. As I read your words I realised there have only ever been two people in my life who totally trusted my judgement and believed in my ability to succeed and now I have lost them both.

I woke this morning from a restless night of dreams and realised quite clearly that at this stage in my life there will never be another to whom I can look up. I had my brother William in my childhood who taught me to be independent, and Henry as my life partner, though that partnership lasted only a little more than ten years, but it is my father who has been the constant strength in my life. There will be no others now and the saddest condition of this feeling is that I did not really understand this, until I heard of his death by telegram.

Since Henry died, father has written me letters of love and encouragement each week, spurring me into action with his faith and humour and understanding the terrible void and loneliness. As I wrote his obituary for the

Express today, I realised again what a remarkable man he was but I also realised that I will never have another letter from him again.

Although I think I am an independent woman, I have relied on the inner belief of father's faith in me to drive my ambitions. Now my last rudder is gone and I worry that I may fall along the way, without this support. It has taken the death of my own father to make me realise how keenly my children must still miss theirs so we all sat together tonight and shared our sadness and our tears and our memories and I think that was better healing than all the potions in the world.

Thank you for understanding how I feel and for reminding me of so many of the happy events of our childhood in Tumut with father's energy and sense of fun infecting us all with pure joy. You are quite right, your father and my father were indeed pioneers in the area and deserve to be remembered for all they contributed in the formative years of his colony.

From one proud daughter to another, I love you as a sister

Your affectionate friend,

Marion



Gidley Street
Molong
October 31 1881

Misses Matilda and Alice Large
Richmond Street
Tumut

My dearest sisters, Alice and Matilda

I cannot begin to tell you the pall that has fallen over me since father's death.

Because I am so far from Tumut, my heart wants to believe that nothing has changed. I could forget you had buried father and that would mean I need

not worry about mother and all could go on as before. I determined that is how I would cope, but when I went through the mail this morning, I found a letter from father, written three days before his death.

That letter served to remove any false belief of his being alive, for it was a final goodbye, acknowledging that his time was at an end and that he would never see me again. Even in his own hour of need, his compassion allowed him to reach out and comfort a daughter he knew relied on his love and support and to give me the words and the memory I needed to close the door on his life. That letter, written in his hand, more than anything else made me realise that my father is dead.

Please know that I hold you all in my heart and prayers and I understand the difficult time you all have ahead, trying to re-establish a school and generate an income.

Please keep me informed about mother's health, although I know you are both under her direction not to worry any of us with her problems, I would not want a situation to occur again where I did not know how gravely ill a parent was until it was too late.

I thank you both for all you did for father in the absence of those of us who do not live near and remind you again, that you have the deepest respect and love of

your sister

Marion



82,000 rabbits were killed on a station at Menindee last month.

The Molong Express 1881



The Molong Express
16 November 1881

Mr W M Mackenzie
"Borrodale"
Cudal

Dear Mr Mackenzie

I received today the basket of produce you sent me, by way of thanking me in advance for consideration on how I am to report your current court case in the Express.

Although I am sure you had no such idea when dropping the basket off before dawn at our back door this morning that a gift like this could be construed as encouragement for my more favourable comment in the paper, I feel I must return this to you, by messenger, untouched.

I am sure you will understand that my position is one of impartiality. My job is to report the facts as I see them as a service to the community who pay good money to buy a copy of my newspaper. These facts may in turn alert them to unscrupulous people and matters of concern in their community, which may affect their families or their livelihood. The grapevine provides gossip, I provide veracity and I like to believe that my readers continue to support my efforts because they know they will always be presented with the absolute truth.

In a small community such as this, I will not risk my reputation by being seen to allow friendship or favour to guide my writing hand and I am sure you will understand that both integrity and honour are important commodities for an editor.

I trust, now that you are acquainted with the facts, that you will not place me in this situation again and I expect you will do all that is necessary in the community to deflate this rumour about you "having my ear", well before the next issue goes to print on Saturday.

I wish you well with your legal proceedings and will no doubt see you at court on Monday.

Yours faithfully

(Mrs) Marion Leathem

Editor and Proprietor



Molong
17 March 1881

Mr James Elworthy
Gundagai Times
Gundagai

My dear James,

We had a little success today and I thought you would be glad for me, so I am writing this letter to you, as one business person to another.

I have been talking to Dalton Brothers in Orange about advertising in the Express. They are by far the biggest general store in the district and a lot of the local people make the trip to Orange weekly or at least monthly to purchase bulk supplies.

As they are Catholic they only give patronage to the newspapers which support their faith, but I wrote to them and explained how much trade actually comes from this district and offered them a generous rate for regular advertising. I had a very gracious letter back from John Dalton himself, requesting a feature advertisement each week for the next twelve months. I know you will share my sense of relief at this success, as this alone will pay the compositor's wages each week and let me concentrate on the local merchants. Once they see Dalton Bros. advertising on the front page, they might understand why Dalton Bros. are successful and realise there is value in advertising.

Too often when I approach the local businessmen, they tell me that only the new in business and the unsuccessful need to sell their names in newspapers. It is a frustrating argument to hide their own meanness, and no matter how I explain that businesses such as Haslam's Store and Wells Saddlery, who advertise regularly, are examples of how advertising actually promotes a business to their existing patrons and re-establishes the vendor in the mind of the buyer, they do not budge. I am hoping that the Dalton Bros advertisement will make the local merchants realise that the custom of the locals can be seduced by a much bigger general merchant, and encourage them to act. Mr Dalton has asked me to call in to see him when I am next in the Orange and I will do that, even though it is an inconvenience to stop and waste time chatting. I am hoping that he might set an example for other merchants at a distance to Molong to look at a diversified market of customers in the growing areas west of the mountains.

I feel that little by little the people are beginning to trust my ability, even though as old Harry Barnes said last Tuesday when I went to see if he would like to advertise in the next edition, "You sure are a determined woman Mrs Leathem. I have been telling you for these past two years that I don't hold with advertising and you still keep coming and knocking on my door. Are you trying to wear me down or brow beat me?" I assured him it was both.

I wanted to thank you again for all you did for father and your continuing support of mother. I know she holds you in the greatest respect, as do we all, and I am pleased that she seems to be back to her old self and duties so quickly.

I must go to bed as it is Friday tomorrow and that is the busiest day of the week,

Tell Henrietta I will write next week and give my love to the children.

With kindest regards

Your sister in law

Marion Leathem

New Spring Drapery.
1889. OPENING OF THE SEASON. 1889.
FIRST GRAND SHOW!
DALTON BROTHERS
 HAVE much pleasure in advising their numerous patrons of the arrival of their early consignments of **New Summer Drapery**. **TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY (250) PACKAGES** have already been opened, and contain a **SPLENDID ASSORTMENT** of all the **Latest Novelties for the Season.**

The Dress Department.
 All the Newest Styles and Fabrics are now on view, and comprise some really Choice Goods.

Black, Red, Blue, Green, and all the latest colors, in all the latest styles, and in all the latest fabrics. Also, a large stock of all the latest styles of dresses, in all the latest fabrics. Also, a large stock of all the latest styles of dresses, in all the latest fabrics. Also, a large stock of all the latest styles of dresses, in all the latest fabrics.

PRINTS! A Specialty! PRINTS!

Prints of all the latest styles, and in all the latest fabrics. Also, a large stock of all the latest styles of dresses, in all the latest fabrics. Also, a large stock of all the latest styles of dresses, in all the latest fabrics.

**Daltons Brothers Advertisement
 from the Molong Express 1889**

Molong
 16 November 1881

Mr Henry Wrixon
 "Raheen"
 Studley Park Road
 Kew

My dear cousin Henry

It was nice to hear from you, after all this time. I can assure you my mother is well but has moved to Cootamundra, to be near my brother John, who farms down there.

With the decline in mining and this incessant drought, there are not as many parents in Tumut who can afford a private education for their daughters, deeming it not as important as an education for their sons. She has therefore opened another school in Cootamundra, which has better prospects, in conjunction with my two youngest sisters Alice and Matilda, who share the teaching duties with her.

Since father's death, she has been troubled by some of his old creditors who, though he had obtained a Certificate of Estate, slander her reputation, and I believe a change of location will bode well for her health and optimism.

In this colony, which cares less for class or breeding, and where a ticket of leave is no obstacle to wealth and land ownership, it is sad that women in business are still treated so shabbily. Fate can play difficult games for many and to have no economic standing in your own right is very limiting when you are attempting to raise a family or indeed, run a business. The Married Women's Property Act, if passed in England next year, is a step towards giving women the propensity to run their own lives, and would allow for a woman in my circumstances to remarry and still have control over her own interests, should she choose. I hope Australia will follow suit.

I did not mean to turn this letter into a political statement, but as you will certainly be aware, all things great are tied up with all things small and I am often confronted by the unfairness of our government which still accords rights based on ancient laws, particularly those relating to gender.

I look forward to hearing from you again soon. Please give my best regards to your wife and my congratulations to you both on your new son.

With fond regards Henry

Your cousin

Marion Leathem



Henry John Wrixon KCMG, QC 1839-1913
University of Melbourne Archives
Marion Leatham's Cousin – arrived from Ireland
1850 with his father Judge Nicholas Wrixon



The Molong Express
Molong
12 April 1882

Mr James Elworthy
Tumut and Gundagai Times
Gundagai

My dear James,

This letter will serve to introduce Mr George Stuart, who has been a resident of Molong for some years and a friend to both Henry and me.

Mr Martin has recently suffered a terrible loss in the death of his wife and has been left with the care of four small children. Because of the drought, which has ruined much farming land in this district, Mr Martin has lost his crops and his stock and instead has decided to try his fortune at gold mining. He was much interested in the recent strikes around Adelong and he has had experience in the goldfields of Ophir and Gulgong.

I thought perhaps with your connections in the area, you may be able to assist him with some information on where the most lucrative fields are located and perhaps introduce him to people who may be able to assist him this vocation.

While Mr Stuart is in Tumut, I am caring for his children who are firm friends of my own brood, so we are a merry if somewhat crowded little group at present, but I trust that under your guidance, Mr Stuart will soon make enough money to come back and reclaim his home and his children and provide them with a loving father and a stable life.

I thank you in advance for your assistance to Mr Martin and trust you will not see this request as an imposition. I understand the realities of being left alone with a family to support only too well and of course, men are not as well equipped to deal with the issues of family as women.

My very best regards to you and my love to Henrietta. Please tell her I will write to her this week.

Your loving sister in law

Marion Leathem



John Ebbs Leathem Newspaper proprietor. Liability £19
4d - Assets £19 6s

The Maitland Mercury 13 July 1882



Molong Express
15 July 1882

Mr John Leathem
27A Selwyn Street
Paddington

Dear John,

As you know, payment due for end of June was paid accordingly, on time and as prescribed by our binding legal document, so I was surprised today to receive your letter asking me to finalise all payments to you for the sale of the Express.

I saw the notice in the Maitland Mercury where your debts have now exceeded your assets and the debts are being called in, so I understand your desperation, but I do not understand how in all conscience you can expect me to suddenly find the money to pay you another eighteen months of payments within thirty days when you know the struggle I have to look after the family and keep the Express operating.

I also took umbrage at the tone of your letter, but will forgive that to some extent because I understand you are under pressure to pay back loans you

have taken out, but I want to clearly state that I cannot afford to pay you any more than I am legally bound to do and I am in no way responsible for your financial situation.

In life I have found that if there is some area where I am constantly under strain, it is because I am not attending correctly to my affairs and I do what I can to remedy the situation so that it does not occur again. We are after all the masters of our own fate. It is not my place to advise on your personal or business dealings, but perhaps you should not take the risks you take without thoroughly investigating the potential gains and consequences from your investments and perhaps it would be prudent to consult with your wife before you commit to ventures which have the potential to fail.

If I can afford to make the next payment before December, I will, but I cannot commit to that until at least October as I have had to pay out for supplies of materials to replace those damaged in the last flood.

I am happy to write a letter to your debtors in reference to the money you will have available from me in the future, but I do not see that I can do any more at present.

I trust you will not forget that I paid personal debts you had incurred during your time in Molong, to keep good relations with the merchants after you left the Express.

I wish you well in these trying times but I do not consider myself in any way responsible for your current dilemma and if you continue to speak ill of me in our industry I will have no choice but to invoke the clause in our contract which prohibits this action and effectively frees me from the obligation of the remainder of the debt.

Your sister in law

Marion Leathem



Molong
13 July 1882

Mrs John Ebbs Leathem
27A Selwyn Street
Paddington

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL – BY HAND

My dear sister-in-law Marian

My neighbour, Mrs Hayes is visiting family in Paddington and has kindly offered to deliver this to you by hand.

I understand that you have found yourselves in dire circumstances and I am sorry to hear that John will need to declare bankruptcy, but it may be the easiest way to clear the debts and you can then start again. My own father had a similar situation and although I do not agree with shirking responsibility, I worry that your husband does not have the financial knowledge to conduct his affairs as well as he should and you and the children have become unwilling and unwitting victims of his actions.

I enclose this money for you alone, to buy what you need for your children and yourself, to weather this calamity. I must caution that you do not advise John you have this money for it will be swallowed up to pay the debts which are already beyond salvage. I send this to you as a sister, to pay for medicine for the baby and provide food to sustain you all until John can resolve his debts.

I am not encouraging you to be deceitful, but I do encourage you to take control of your affairs for I fear John cannot. This sum may help you a little but it is given on the understanding that this is something between you and I and I expect your discretion.

I have great respect for you Marian and I am sorry you are having these trials. I am also sorry that circumstances around the Express have moved

our families away from each other, but I hope that does not mean you and I cannot be friends.

Please remind the children they have a loving aunt. You are in my prayers and my thoughts and I hope you know you have a loving sister in law in

Marion Leathem



By the last issue of the Molong Express we see that paper has changed hands, and is now the sole property of Mrs H. V. Leathem, to whom all moneys due to the concern are to be paid.

We also see that the paper has reverted to its former size and style, and the absence of its column of religion and riddle is a noticeable feature.

It is now more like a newspaper, which must take place under the guidance of an experienced manager.

The Gundagai Times Adelong and Tumut, Adelong and
Murrumbidgee District Advertiser 26 September 1882



Molong Express Office
Molong
18 November 1882

Mrs Mary Anne Large
Cootamundra Ladies Seminary College
Cootamundra

My dearest mother

Each day in the paper I seem to report on another gold strike in another part of this district. The promise of instant wealth is as strong as ever for the men who toil night and day in pits of muddy water and cold conditions and I am always amazed at how the news of a strike can turn even reasonable men into likely prospectors.

There was another strike at Copper Hill this week and within two days of my reporting it in the Express, more than one hundred visitors had arrived in the town with their familiar collection of gold pans, tents and that lean physique and hungry eyes which accompanies the long term prospector. I am certainly not complaining as the paper does very well from any new resident of the town, and if the Express is seen to accurately report new strikes, the prospectors will buy the paper to keep abreast of these developments and the merchants will advertise their wares to these new comers. We in fact seem to be the first port of call for most of them as they are hoping to glean information, not yet in print, about new areas of interest and profitable strikes.

I am glad to give them any news I can and I like to extract their own stories from them as well, as most have travelled for a long time in this manner. Some are accompanied by wives and small children, who are usually left to sit in the wagon outside, whilst the father gathers whatever information is needed to determine their next trek. I could never be one of these wives, not knowing each day where they will be sleeping that night nor how they will afford to feed the children, but there seem to be many women who are prepared to live their lives like this. Perhaps they feel they have no choice and that the life of a gypsy is their idea of adhering to the vows they made at the altar.

When I see these wagons pull up, I send out a billy of tea and cakes and bread so that the children and women at least will have something to eat that is not bully beef or damper. I used to ask the women if they would like to come inside but found that their desperation makes them light fingered and I have lost many small items from the house and office in this manner so cannot extend my charity this far anymore.

For every prospector who makes money from a strike there are hundreds more who do not. However the wonderlust for gold is incurable in some men and we often see those, whose family cannot endure the road anymore, sleeping alone on the edge of town near the river before they head off to the next site. Some telegraph small amounts of cash back to families who have

long since given up hope of a substantial strike and have chosen to at least stay in one place while their breadwinner turns over yet another pan full of clay and water in hope of finding his fortune.

Because of the proximity of Ophir and Lucknow to Molong and the pink veined quartz which is scattered around every field in this area, we will always have the prospectors. With times so hard, the lure of gold will always be attractive to those who do not know how to earn a living in a conventional way. With any who seem to have nouse and determination, I tell them that the Adelong fields are most promising, as my friend Mr Stuart appears to be having quite a successful time there and it is not as crowded as some of the local fields. Mr Stuart's letters to his children describe how Adelong has been overtaken by Tumut as the mines prosper and I wonder if he will ever again live in Molong, although he must come back at some stage to collect his children.

My staff chide me for my charity to the miners, including Mr Stuart, but whenever a young man walks through the door of the Express office looking for work or I see a fresh faced youth, huddled in his swag under the willows on the river, I am put I mind of my brother Godfrey and wonder if anyone assisted him when he was searching for gold on the Lachlan Fields.

Whenever I take a pan of bread and meat to one of them, I use the time while they are eating to find out from whence they have come and hear their stories. If I feel they have neither the temperament nor the brains to survive on the course they have set, I try to persuade them to turn back for their homes and their families and occasionally I will write letters for them if they are unable to write for themselves, asking families to send money to enable them to go home. If I can save one mother from hearing of the death of her son on some distant field, I feel that what I do is not in vain.

The children are well, growing so quickly. The boys are all easy to manage, as boys mostly are, being simple creatures, but Nellie seems to need more management than Alice ever did and I do not understand her temperament. She is such a difficult child and only Alice seems to understand her moods, so I regret that I am happy to leave Alice to see to her needs. If I thought a switch might assist, I would use it, but Nellie is such a defiant child, strong willed but endearing and Alice defends her actions, so I would rather not engage in the conflict.

With nine children in the house at present, I feel I need to keep a firm hand, but sometimes I am so weary, I find I am more lenient than I should be.

Matilda writes that your new school is thriving with good enrolments and that you have been welcomed into Cootamundra society. I often wish my children had the benefit of an education, such as only you can provide and I contemplate sending Nellie down to you for a year to learn something of discipline and responsibility, but I am conscious of putting any extra burden on you.

Your loving daughter

Marion



Molong
15 August 1882

Mrs Chas Smith
Bustle Hill
Wollongong

My dearest sister, Maria

Thank you for your kind letter and your solicitous remarks regarding our welfare. Although each day poses a new set of problems, the imminent financial danger has lessened and I am more confident about the future. I have taken on the full editorial role, having been frustrated by the efforts of several unreliable hired men and I do find there is some satisfaction in being able to report the news with a little of my own perspective attached.

You will be pleased to know that Alice was awarded her first class license as a teacher this month and has taken up a position at Hilltop, which is near Wellington. It means she must travel out on the coach on Sunday evening and return on Friday evening, but she prefers that to spending weekends at her lodgings in Wellington. We all miss her but there are no positions available in the local school and I am glad she can earn her own living if needs arise

The smaller children miss her as she is a second mother to Nellie and Frederick and Mr Stuart's children adore her. They are delightful children

and we all laugh at their antics and will miss them when their father finally comes to collect them, whenever that will be. He writes enthusiastically about missing them but we have not had a visit from him since his departure. I think like most men the concept of fatherhood is much more convenient than the practical application.

Nellie is now seven years old and I think she is growing up into a sweet young thing, although she is abominably vain. I constantly repeat mother's old adage about vanity and pride coming before a fall but I suppose it is acceptable to be in awe of your own power when so young and you have the fawning attention of your brothers.

Although Frederick is younger, he seems such a sturdy little chap and is much more sensible at times than his older brothers, but I do catch him in situations where I believe the firm hand of a father would do more good than that of his mother. He does push me to my limits at times, but at night when I am sitting by the fire, he slips in beside me and lays his head in my lap and I feel my own tensions soothe away as I stroke his wee head and he drifts off to sleep.

The older children say he gets more favours from me than they, but I suppose he is the last child I will ever have and so any affection I bestow on him is the affection for all the children who will now never be born to me and I remember his birth in a happier and lighter time in my life when there were so many dreams and ideals ahead. It is always peculiar how life can be stretching before you with a limitless horizon one day and the next you are negotiating a bend what never seems to end.

I trust that you and the children are well, I long to see you all and I should probably not recognise the older ones now they are grown up and working, but it is almost impossible for me to get away for even a day. Would you travel up for a visit, Maria? You would be so welcome and this is a lovely little town at this time of the year. Please do try. I long for the company of someone with whom I can be myself and perhaps the girl I was in years gone by.

Give my love to Mr Smith and the children, and let them know that they have a loving aunt and you a sister

in

Marion



The Molong Express
16 September 1882

Mr George Stuart
C/- Adelong General Post Office
Adelong

Dear Mr Stuart,

Thank you for your letter from Tumut and I hope this will find you well and hearty on the goldfields. I trust that since you last wrote, your luck has changed and that you are now finding payable gold on your claim.

My brother-in-law, Mr Elworthy has told me that you decided to look for gold in areas which are not currently seen as part of the main vein running through the area, and is concerned that you may be wasting your time and energy. Although I know nothing about the business of mining, I do know a lot about people and can assure you that Mr Elworthy has always been regarded as an astute and clever man and many who have heeded his advice, have prospered beyond their own expectations. Indeed, when I gave you the introduction to him, I hoped you would make use of his counsel to assist you in your endeavours. However, I also know that one must trust one's own judgments in matters like this, so I wish you well, but only comment that there is no shame in asking for assistance and admitting that previous decisions have not worked out as well as one had hoped.

The children are all well. Elizabeth and Nellie are firm friends and inseparable. They have taken over the management of your twins with great success and walk about everywhere, one apiece on their hip, so they look like miniature mothers. We all laugh at their antics but the twins are thriving under their combined care and they cause us little concern.

Young William and Frederick are also well matched and help me quite a lot in the Express office, sorting type and cleaning the galleys each Saturday. The children all miss you of course and I know Elizabeth especially is pining for her father, but I hope the contact of another family and the familiar routine of daily chores and rituals can help fill some of the loss that they feel. I

believe children rise to the occasion and I am impressed with the way they have fitted into our little group.

They look forward to your letters so I would advise you to write more often and perhaps individually to the older children. Having no mother, they crave contact with their remaining parent and their disappointment when the mail wagon arrives with nothing for them is obvious. I will assure them that there will be letters from you next week.

I trust that you are in good health and that you are not regretting your decision to change your vocation.

Yours respectfully

Marion Leathem



Molong
18 October 1882

Mrs John Williamson
Hovell Street
Cootamundra

My dearest sister Cecelia

Life goes on in our small community in much the same way as before, although the children have somehow grown up substantially and I cannot for the life of me recall when it happened. It seems just a short time ago that they were all children and now Alice is 15 and even dear Frederick, my baby, is nearly 5. I suppose I have been so involved in the business of keeping us in business that I had neglected to watch their progress, happening as it was under my nose, and as a consequence I now find my house crowded with small adults.

I also happened to catch a glimpse of myself in the glass last night and realised I am no longer a young woman, although I refuse to call myself middle aged. When mother was my age, I recall thinking she was getting old

but when applying that same principle to myself, every part of me rebels. Perhaps age is after all something only in the mind and I am determined that I will not be relegated under any heading which will determine how people think of me. In fact, when reporting in the paper on a local incident involving a woman of my age, I referred to her as a young matron. Her gratitude when I next met her was prodigious and I felt I had done something worthwhile for all local women of my gender.

In fact I can understand why some women are coy about their age. I used to think it only vanity and wore my years with pride, but I see that people categorise and judge you and want to place you in a box with all other of your ilk, and in this part of the world, that means you should be taking it easy and resting after lunch on Sunday, a practice I detest.

Charles is now officially apprenticed to the paper and seems very competent, but I suppose all the children have been watching and helping me with the Express in some way since Henry died. Alice regularly writes the "Social Mems" and William delights in the orderliness of the printer's blocks, in fact I'm sure his proficiency at school stems from his chores here with words. Even John who is only nine assists with delivery of the papers and is well known to the local businesses who advertise with us. I pay them all a small allowance as I believe aptitude and diligence should be rewarded and it does save me engaging someone else on staff.

Nellie is quite the beauty of the family and is popular with everyone and Alice coddles her and spoils her terribly. Alice appears to spend her evenings at her boarding house in Wellington in the production of outfits for Nellie who is careless about clothes but we are hoping she will be more responsible as she gets older. Frederick is by far the easiest of the boys. The older boys call him "Bunda" for no reason I can determine, but I am dismayed to find that his school friends and several of the locals have taken it up as well, no matter how I try to discourage its use.

Mr Stuart is still in Adelong so I have the continuing care of his children. He thought he would only be away for six months but I feel it will be at least twelve, but I have a woman who assists me with them now that Alice is away and they seem content. When their mother died, I could not bear to see them divided up amongst her relatives, knowing how much my children depended upon each other when Henry died, so I proposed that I should care for them until their father could re-establish himself. I suppose a full house helps to fill any empty spaces in my life and I go to bed each night too exhausted to worry about myself, but I wonder if I should have put a time limit on my offer.

I am pleased the influenza did not affect you directly. It has been devastating in the cities and I am pleased we have the country air and space to give us some protection from these germs though I still burn sulphur in the office each week to limit the risk of contagion, much to the delight of the Reverend Aldiss, who mutters asides about brimstone and my reminding people to attend church for fear of what they might face if they do not. It seems each village must have a comic!

Your loving sister

Marion Leathem



**Believed to be Helen Isabelle
Leathem (Nellie)
Aged approximately 9 years**



Molong
12 December 1882

Mr George Stuart
C/- Adelong Post Office

Dear Mr Stuart

I trust that you are faring well. Mr Elworthy has expressed admiration for your determination and ability to wrest gold from areas where others have ceased to have an interest and from his account, you have been singularly successful.

Elizabeth was taken down with a sore throat and a fever last week and, fearing influenza, I called in the doctor, but she was better in a few days. I believe of the four, she misses you the most and each night she writes a few lines in her childish hand of the letter, which I have enclosed. She is a sweet little girl and I worry that the loss of her mother and now your continued absence, despite the care and attention she has here, is affecting her nature and I was hoping you might see your way fit to come back to visit the children for a short time soon. Please do not see this as me in any way wishing to rescind on my promise to you of caring for them in your absence, quite the opposite, I find them delightful but they miss you.

I know what it is like for children to lose a parent early – they go on about their lives and we, as adults, believe they are managing well. But I think children often do not know how to express their sadness and grief. They may wonder if perhaps their missing parent is just away and will come back soon. I do not think Elizabeth has understood the concept of death very well, though I take her to her mother's grave each Sunday when I put flowers on Henry's. Reverend Aldiss agrees with me that a visit from you might be a better tonic than anything he or I can offer.

Christmas would provide an occasion to present the children with some tangible tokens of your affection and to reassure them that they retain a place in your heart even when they are not in your presence and we would be happy for you to share our Christmas fare.

I have not spoken to the children about the contents of this letter as I did not want to raise their spirits but I think no matter how important is it to provide for your family financially, it is more important to provide them with the love and proximity of their remaining parent.

I look forward to being able to inform your children of your impending visit.

With kind regards

Marion Leathem



Molong Express

One quarter in advance	5s (in advance)
One year	20s (in advance)
Single copy	(6d)

Advertising

One inch	3s
Successive inch	1s6d
Births, deaths marriages	2s 6d



Riddell Street
Molong
12 December 1882

Mrs M A Eastmore – Dressmaker
Bank Street
Molong

Dear Mrs Eastmore,

After our appointment today I have sent to Sydney for three lengths of fabric for the new dresses I ordered. The fabrics should be here next week and I'm sure you will have time to complete them for me before Christmas as I have some business functions to attend and would like to look as presentable as possible. Please pay particular attention to the fitting around the waist and the neck, which I would like to be flattering and not include the ruffles to the sleeve, which I find quite annoying when working at my desk.

I hope you will not take offence at my procuring fabrics from a source other than yourself, indeed I know your fabrics are of good quality and are serviceable but I really do not want the occasion of meeting myself at every turn, as half the women in Molong seem to be wearing that same style and particular colour of burgundy which you have in your window and which is unflattering to all but a few.

I believe a woman in business has to be seen to stand out a little from those she serves in the community and although I am not vain about my clothes and appearance, I believe that people are entitled to expect a degree of creative flair in their choice of vendor.

You have a unique position as the only real dressmaker in this town and I urge you to make the most of that opportunity before someone other than I recognises the potential and sets up in opposition. Advertising is an excellent way to show your customers that you are conversant with their needs as well as the latest fashions. I am happy to give you the name of the merchant in Sydney from whom I have ordered the fabrics and a copy of their catalogue.

I look forward to receiving my new dresses by the 20th.

Yours sincerely

Marion Leathem



After a "shanderydan" journey from Ironbarks, the Shipp theatrical troupe, including Pianist Voss, arrived all alive (according to premise) on Monday last, but had their hopes "wrecked" through the School of Arts Treasurer's disinclination to let them perform in the hall till it was paid for in advance. We may add, for the benefit of our contemporaries, that the Shipp company sailed leaving us weeping over their advertising account

Molong Express September 1 1888



Molong
5 January 1882

Mr George Stuart
C/- General Post Office
Adelong

My dear Mr Stuart

It was good to see you these past few days and I wanted to report your children have benefited greatly from your visit. I understand it was an inconvenience to visit just at the time you had made a new strike but I trust you will now understand why I thought your visit important.

I am pleased that your claim is prospering and understand your need to move to Adelong permanently. I can certainly recommend it as a community, having lived in the district so much of my life, and indeed I used to travel there quite often with my father.

Your stories of Tumut and Adelong made me a little homesick for a life which was easier for me than the one I live now and remind me of the time when I

was newly married with small children at my knee and little to concern me except what meal would be put on the table that night. Looking back, it seemed such a carefree life and I was made nostalgic by your mention of friends and places I still recall fondly.

But I think it is best that providence does not let us know the lot we have in store, for if I had foreseen that I would one day be mistress of my own existence running a country newspaper on my own and supporting six children, I would never have allowed my husband to persuade me to move so far from my family.

I would not have taken on my current role willingly but it is a role I have come to enjoy, so do not take this flight of fancy into the past as a regret for my lot. But just for a short time during these past few days of holidays and talking with you, I was able to recall what it was like to be young and carefree again.

I wish you well with your endeavours and you do not need to worry about your children or their welfare while they are in my care. I treat them as I do my own and I will miss them when they move to Adelong.

I wish you continued good fortune and remain

Yours respectfully

Marion Leathem



The Molong Express
Riddell Street
Molong
10 January 1882

Alderman Joseph Morris
Mayor,
Molong Municipal Council
Molong

Dear Mr Morris

I have just written to Mr Percy Scarr the Superintendent of Roads to complain about the appalling state of the thoroughfares in this town. I understand that it is the duty of the council to monitor the condition of the roads, but as all my previous correspondence on this matter remains unanswered, I feel that I should, as a good citizen, alert the proper authorities of work that is required.

When we elected a council, one major task promised was to do something significant with the state of the streets and footpaths, so that good citizens do not take their lives in their hands on every errand to the shop or the bank. I am sure if you took time to go back on the minutes you will notice this was to be a priority, but council seem more inclined to direct their concerns to areas which have more social prominence.

This week I had a visitor to our office trip over the very large pothole at the front of the Express office, which has been steadily growing deeper with each bout of rain, though my son fills it daily with sand. Luckily it was a young and fit gentleman who fell and was able to save himself from serious injury, but next time it may be one of our older citizens. It is an abomination to find a veritable crater in the main street of a prosperous town such as ours.

Indeed my visitor compared our streets and footpaths unfavourably with those in Adelong, which is a much smaller and less successful town. If Adelong can tend to its roads, I see no reason why Molong cannot do the same.

I have been looking for some relevant material for my editorial this week and am sure the local people would like some assistance with their decision making on nominations for the upcoming council elections.

I look forward to your response

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marion Leathem



Molong
16 February 1883

Mr George Stuart
"Nandabulla"
Adelong

My Dear Mr Stuart,

I am not quite sure what to write in response to your letter of last week. I must admit that the last thing I was expecting when I opened the envelope was a written proposal of marriage.

The sentiments expressed in your letter are quite true. We are both alone with children to rear and at times the loneliness is difficult to bear when so many of those around us are sharing their time with the companion they have chosen for their life's journey.

And you were quite right in saying that I seem to have more regard for the written word than the spoken and that you thought I might better comprehend the sincerity of a written proposal rather than a conventional offer. I did chuckle over that, as I am sure you intended me to do.

It is difficult to convey to you the emotions that your letter brought to my mind. I suppose since the death of my husband, I have thrown myself into the business of raising my children and running the newspaper to the exclusion of all else. Indeed it has been put to me by well-meaning family and friends that I have used the vehicle of the newspaper to suppress my real emotions in dealing with the world and perhaps that is true. The death of my husband came with so little warning and at such a critical time in the early days of the newspaper that I simply acted before I thought of the consequences of a woman managing alone in the world of commerce. Indeed I am rather grateful now that I had the burden of the newspaper to help me through the early days of widowhood as I was able to immerse myself in the deadlines and written work required during the day and at night my children needed my comfort and attention to a degree which excluded any sadness and longing of my own.

When I look back on those days, I was reluctant to admit I was alone with a family and no real means of supporting myself. I immersed myself in my work as a form of denying any weakness on my part and pretending that everything would be all right if only I could get out this week's editions and the next week's and so forth. The paper allowed me for a time to forget that I had no one with whom to share my life. I suppose I embraced the entire population of this town through the paper and believed them to be embracing me so that I did not miss the husband who had gone where I could not follow.

The Express became my own small shrine to my husband. It was what he had wanted and worked for, for so long, that to let it close or fail or worse, to sell it to another who may not be so solicitous of its success seemed almost an affront to my husband's memory and a denial of what effort had gone before. As I had encouraged my husband in every way to take the chance to start the newspaper up here and had supported him in the long hours it took to make it a success, I felt responsible for his weakened constitution, which possibly brought on the bout of pneumonia, which took his life. Perhaps if he had not worked so hard and given so much of himself for this venture, he may have been able to fight off that terrible illness, but I had pressured him to give all that he could and I'm afraid that he gave everything.

When he was apprenticed to Mr Henry Parkes on The Empire Newspaper in Sydney there was a strike of compositors that left the newspaper without able men to run it. My husband, just a boy of thirteen, worked with the five loyal printers and other apprentices who had stayed on, much to the chagrin of the compositors who were on strike, to ensure the paper was produced each day. This level of responsibility and determination was a standard my husband set himself all his life and although those long hours and gruelling work left him so ill that he needed recuperation of six months in northern Queensland, he always said the experience he got in those few weeks of continuous work taught him more about the newspaper business than any other work could have done.

I suppose you wonder why I am answering a marriage proposal with talk of my husband. It is not in the least romantic from your viewpoint and quite sentimental from mine, but I think that I feel about the Express much as I did about my husband. I have a responsibility to its success that precludes me giving due attention to another person and as such I do not feel I could really marry anyone else and give them fairly of my time.

I know that you are a fair minded man and that you would understand my need to keep the paper running even if I did agree to marry again, but I'm not sure that I could commit myself to another person when I know how much of myself I need to give to the Express. I know that there are editors and managers to be had but I hope you will understand me when I say that I feel my life's blood is running through the paper and it through mine. It has become an appendage to me that I cannot forgo and while ever my commitment to this venture is so strong, I cannot marry anyone, for there is not enough of me to care for my family, my newspaper and a husband and I fear that my commitment to the first two is stronger than my desire for the latter.

I hope that you will understand this long drawn out letter as a way of seeing why I must decline your offer but I hope that you will understand my predicament and my thoughts on this and not feel this is anything to do with you or your children who I have come to look upon with great affection during their stay with me. When I first married I had only one commitment and that was to my new husband and I think that is why our marriage was so happy. Now I have other things to do and I could not give you the care and time such a union and indeed you, deserve.

I do not want you to think that I do not hold you in the highest regard, dear George, but we have always been honest with one another and I hope that my honest response to your intentions is accepted as it is written. I also hope that I will not live to regret this decision for I have thought very long and earnestly over all you have offered, and the allure of companionship is very tempting to one has been alone for four years.

I will miss the children when they leave here but I trust that the relationship they have built with my brood will carry on our friendship even though I cannot continue it in the generous way you have offered.

Please write and let me know that you have not been offended by this rejection and that you will remain, as I do to you

A sincere friend,

Marion Leathem



Molong
February 28 1882

Mrs J Williamson
Gurwood Street
Wagga Wagga

My dearest sister Cecelia

I have just seen off Mr Stuart who came to Molong this week to collect his children and take them to Adelong where he intends to settle. My children will miss the company of the Stuart brood and I must admit the house does seem empty without all the frolicking and raised voices. I will particularly miss the babies who afforded me a last chance of that delightful stage of motherhood where you are always adored and anything you do or say is thought amusing. I was the only mother the twins remembered, their own mother passing away when they were only eighteen months old, so it was quite a wrench for them as well to leave what they perceived to be their home, but I suppose it is best for them to be with their real father, no matter what I really think.

Mr Stuart has done quite well for himself on the Adelong goldfields and as a mark of his gratitude has had made a beautiful gold locket, exquisitely wrought and detailed in pure Adelong gold and inscribed on the front to me as a token of gratitude. I was most touched to receive it for it is very beautiful and by far the most extravagant piece of jewellery I have ever owned and it looks well on the handsome chain he provided with it. We have become quite close through correspondence and I hope he will continue to avail me of news of the children as they grow up.

An empty locket will not replace the empty beds where the children once slept nor the emptiness I currently feel in my heart.

When I look back on how mother coped with twelve of us and ran her various colleges, I realise what an extra ordinary woman she is. I know it is a challenge for me to manage just my six and the newspaper. I think the example set by mother has helped us all see our lives in the true perspective of what we regard as duty but I wonder if sometimes our duty stops us

enjoying the gifts that life has to give. Mother seemed to need no more than she had in her life but I often feel my life is not fully rounded. I know that since I have been widowed, I am much more serious about the business and my need to provide for the children, but now that I feel I have those things under some modicum of control, I wonder what else is left for me. I count my blessings that the Express is now established and the children well and healthy but I sometimes wonder if this will be my lot for the rest of my life

Now Charles is able to assist me much more in the newspaper office, I have been able to relax my hours a little, and that I suppose gives me time to ponder.

I feel quite lonely tonight, as if something has gone from my life – Mr Stuart's children I suppose. The interest around the next edition of the paper usually serves to take my mind off my own troubles as it is all encompassing, but tonight I feel more of a woman than a newspaper Proprietress. I do not feel lonely, I do not think I have ever felt lonely, but I do feel that I may not always make the right decisions, but there, I'm rambling. As father would say I need a good dose of salts for my liver.

I hope all is well with you dear sister during these final months of your pregnancy. And I often think of Frances and wonder how she must be growing into a young woman now. I think the conflict between her and her stepfather is only normal when she had you to herself for so long before you remarried. I am sure Mr Williamson does not intend to treat her differently to his own children, but men are sometimes threatened by the love a mother has for her children, feeling it is greater than the love she has for her husband, which I think it probably is. Any mother I know would lay down her life for her children and sacrifice her own happiness for theirs. Men are simple creatures and not made of such stuff. Frances also represents that first love you had for John and that was a love which will always seem sacred and untarnished, because he died so young and your time together was only filled with happy events. Your marriage to Mr Williamson, no matter how successful, can never compete with that, subject as it is to the rigours of time and family. But it is better to live with the day to day challenges of a flesh and blood husband than the ethereal ideal of one who will never again hold you in his arms.

I wrote to mother yesterday as I felt from her letter that she was tiring after all the unsettling business of selling up what was left of her possessions. I do not dare think what parting with her treasured writing desk would have cost

her in emotions but it apparently was the most valuable piece of furniture and went a long way to paying off some of the debts.

My love to the children, especially Frances. I feel oddly close to her tonight, as I do to all children who have lost a parent. Please tell her that all will be well and of course, my love to you and Mr Williamson.

Your loving sister

Marion



Molong Express

June 20 1883

Mrs James Elworthy
First Avenue
Gundagai

My dearest Henrietta,

It was so good to get your very long and newsy letter today along with the copy of the Gundagai Times.

I like to read your paper, simply to reacquaint myself with the people I knew when Henry and I lived there. Of course it is always sad to read of the death of the people I knew well, for although I know that I change from day today, in my mind Gundagai remains unchanged, the people are all as they were ten years ago and it is equally bewildering to see the marriage notice of someone who was just a child when we lived there. I noticed that John Isaac's younger sister has announced her engagement to Mr George Stuart. I had not realised they were acquainted but I recall that she was quite young while Mr Stuart is well into his forties. I suppose she will learn to be a mother to his children but if she has inherited the wilful streak of her mother's I'm not sure that the marriage will be a match made in heaven. However, if you do see Mr Stuart, please give him my regards and best wishes. I am surprised he did not write me himself to tell me the news, I suppose that

friendships change and one can never rely on a man to take care of common good manners.

We had a rather grand affair at the hall last night. Several members of the dramatic society had arranged to stage a concert but one of the members had seen fit to visit the hotel for some Dutch courage before the event. As the choir finished a rather enthusiastic rendition of My Grandfather's Clock, the gentleman in question puffed out his chest to demonstrate I suppose his superior vocal qualities and overbalanced and fell off the stage, straight into the lap of our local minister's wife, who had just received a bouquet of roses. The roses, as are their wont in this area, were overly endowed with thorns and the gentleman, in his effort to escape their attack, pushed himself violently off the poor woman, causing her to fall backwards and knock down an entire row of seat which in turn upset the supper table erected at the side of the hall with all manner of good things to eat.

The clatter and uproar and the mess were so extensive that a halt had to be called to the proceedings while order was restored but I feel that all the performers fell rather flat in comparison to that opening event.

I had attended as a representative of the paper to write an account of the performance but I had to leave early, as I could not stop chuckling every time I recalled the display. When I consider now what I will write on this, I must admit there are times when I really love this work.

My love to you and the children and my best regards to Mr Elworthy.

Your devoted sister

Marion Leathem



The Molong Express
Riddell Street
16 March 1884

Dr Andrew Ross MP
"Dilga"
Cumnock

Dear Dr Ross,

Although I have responded to your official letters to the Express on matters of local interest in my capacity as Editor, I was somewhat perplexed at the tone of your latest correspondence, dated last Tuesday, and felt it might be best to answer you directly.

You and I have been associated and acquainted through a great many issues on a personal and professional basis. You stood beside me as my husband died and you attended the children on numerous occasions for various ailments. Both the Express and I have supported your efforts to represent Molong at a state level in government and we have worked together to promote issues we both felt were in the interest of the local residents. Further, the paper has openly acknowledged you when you have succeeded or been usurped by elements outside your control.

We have both chosen careers that require us to be honest, forthright and thick skinned, for making and broadcasting decisions is not always a popular vocation from the perspective of constituents or readers for that matter. I assumed you would understand that although you have only one point of view to express, it falls upon me to represent all points of views to my readers if I am to be fair and unbiased.

I do not believe I question your decisions or policies any more thoroughly than I question those of your opponent nor indeed any other politicians who purport to understand every aspect of the workings of a community such as this. I am at the very front of all news and all opinions, I know what the people are thinking and what they expect and if they choose to use the Express as a voice to express their own frustrations at issues which have a strong impact of their lives, I see nothing wrong with giving them a forum to speak.

You must surely know that I receive a great many letters and pieces of intelligence which are nothing more than slanderous or self-serving, and I choose not to publish those. Nor will I print any information given anonymously for I will not promote the actions of cowards. I have been known to withhold the name of an informant if I feel publishing their details will place them in serious jeopardy, but I pride myself on publishing only that which I know to be true, fair and relevant to our district.

There are decisions you make in your work, which will not always be popular, and I find myself in the same position from time to time. I see this as part of my job. Quite often my personal opinion is the same as the complainant, but it is not necessarily my opinion which is speaking through the paper but the collective voices of the district who use the paper as a vehicle for their discontent, and as long as I own and edit the Express, I will encourage free speech and robust discussion, irrespective of how it affects my own popularity.

I would have thought your position would have been similar after so many years serving the public, so I was surprised by your letter where you feel that I have some sort of vendetta against you and that I unfairly misquote you.

My husband Henry, who was my mentor in all things commercial, was one of the finest journalists in this country and he had an impeccable reputation for only reporting the truth. The Express was founded on that premise and will continue that way as long as I or any other member of the Leathem Family is in control. Sometimes the truth is the hardest news to hear but any forward thinking politician will want to know what is being said about him and his policies to better serve the people he represents. I had always ranked you in that category Andrew, I hope I am not wrong.

Perhaps you would like to call up to the office and see me when you are next in Molong so that we can discuss these differences and regain some of our old footing. It is easy to say things in writing that are later regretted and I would like to think our relationship is stronger than such a misunderstanding.

I look forward to seeing you on your next visit.

Yours respectfully

(Mrs) Marion Leathem

Proprietress, Molong Express



Molong
24 January 1884

Mr James Elworthy
The Gundagai Times
Gundagai

My Dear James

I received a letter from Henrietta this morning and in it she conveyed your concern about the ongoing issues between Andrew Ross and the Express. Apparently he was travelling though Gundagai to a Masonic conference and conveyed to you remarks about my inexperience and lack of professionalism in reporting on his actions of late, with the intent, I am sure, that the news would travel back to me via Henrietta.

Rest assured James that the matter is well within the realms of my capabilities. Dr Ross has had a free hand in this area for a long time and has done some fine work, but refuses to understand why he should be held to account on matters where his actions are against the wishes of his constituents. I'm afraid that Dr Ross underestimates the power of the press and that is an indication of one of his many shortcomings. I have offered to meet with the man on a number of occasions to address what he sees as my attacks on his policies and therefore his person, but he refuses all advances, preferring to carry out the dispute publically by way of letters to the Express and neighbouring papers in Orange and Bathurst, with sly asides about my bias.

Fortunately, my fellow editors understand that his self-worth is more of a problem than any wrong doing on my part, but like us all, they do enjoy a story that generates sensationalism and Dr Ross has some very loyal supporters amongst the local business and wealthier graziers in the area and in these times, it is best to humour those whose advertisements provide an income.

I quite like Dr Ross despite his blindly loyal allegiance to Henry Parkes. He has an enquiring mind and I enjoy banter with him on all nature of topics. In fact, I attended his wedding two years ago and organised a public subscription to buy a wedding present. When he was the Mayor, we worked together on any number of public improvements but since his election to parliament last year, he appears to have lifted himself above the common people and I feel it is my duty to keep him grounded and in touch with public sentiment.

Dr Ross is currently staying at his brother William's property, Dilga, which is the largest spread in this district, some forty thousand acres. William unfortunately has found himself in financial difficulty and has declared insolvency so there is much finalising of affairs taking place. The locals thought that Dr Ross would assist his brother but that appears not to be the case. I have always been a friend to William and his wife, they made Henry and me very welcome when we first came to the district, but the current situation with his brother makes it impossible for me visit them. They have cancelled their subscription to the Express but I do not know if that is from economic necessity or clannishness.

I have no choice but to continue in the same vein with my enquiry of Dr Ross. I believe I am fair. I congratulated him for winning the NSW Government Paper on wool farming and I will publish any letter he wishes to send to me, though he is a prolific and long-winded writer. It is the duty of the paper to raise questions on behalf of those who read it and I feel that though there may be some financial losses in the short term, the subscribers to the Express will ultimately support me and value my integrity. I have to live with myself before I live with the rest of this community, so although I thank you for your concern, I believe the matter is well in hand.

I trust you are having better health at present and I hope that we may have a visit from you and Henrietta soon. You will be impressed with the growth of Molong. It is a very progressive town.

With all good wishes

Marion Leathem



The Molong Express
16th July 1885

Master Charles Leathem
Riddell Street
Molong

Dear Master Leathem

This letter is to confirm your official appointment as apprentice compositor to the Molong Express.

You are expected in the office at 7.30am precisely each morning, Monday to Saturday and may not leave until the office closes at 5.00pm. I will not tolerate tardiness on this point. Even though you are my son, at work, you will be treated on the same basis as all other staff and I write this letter to emphasise the formality of our working relationship.

During working hours or whenever any staff member is present, you will address me as Mrs Leathem. I hope you will appreciate the reason for this.

During working hours, you will perform any tasks requested of you by any staff of The Express, myself included and undertake them with good grace.

Your salary will be five shillings per week paid each Friday. I will speak to you separately about your board at home.

I suggest you keep this letter as a reference for your career. Letters serve to mark the milestones in our lives and your position at The Express is possibly the start of a long newspaper career.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marion Leathem

Proprietress



The Molong Express
Riddell Street
Molong
14 April 1886

Mr James P Hull
Hull Brothers builders
Molong

Dear Mr Hull

Further to your visit to our office and your subsequent quotation and plan, I confirm that we would like to engage your services to build an extension to the offices of the Molong Express at our present location, for the sum of eighty pounds.

I confirm the new buildings are to house the printing press with a separate and lockable area for the storage of inks and supplies. The store area should have wall mounted racks strong enough to support the bulk sheet delivery and adequate ventilation to ensure that the papers do not become mouldy whilst being stored. The other new area is a separate office for me, with a fireplace, as I tend to work often at night and in the early morning when it is coldest. My office is to be east facing so as to maximise the light into the room and the window is to be as large as possible in the wall without compromising the structural integrity of the building.

I know you have offered to use eucalypt for the internal finishes but I would prefer to spend a little more money and have the cedar on the doors, skirting and mantelpiece as I prefer the better quality and intend the office to last as long as I do and I hope that will be a long time.

I understand you will be able to start work on the ninth of May and that the work should take no longer than two months to complete. I am enclosing a deposit cheque of twenty pounds and would like a receipt for this by Friday evening. The balance will be paid upon the satisfactory completion of the project.

Please ensure we have your best trade men on this job and I look forward to a happy conclusion.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marion Leathem



**Marion Large seated front right with 5 of her 11 siblings
Probable - Back row - Richard, Maria, John
Middle Row - Cecelia and Marion Large
Front Row - Henrietta**



The Molong Express
Molong
Date?? 1886

Mr Henry Wrixon
"Raheen"
Kew
Melbourne

My dear Henry

I have been writing the extended editorial for this week's paper as we have great excitement here because the railway line between Sydney and Molong has finally opened and we are expecting the first train through tomorrow, complete with brass bands and ribbon cutting on our new station platform. Now that we have the rail line completed from Sydney to Melbourne and a corresponding link from Molong to Sydney, this provides the possibility of travel for people such as I who do not wish to endure the long and uncomfortable trip by road.

With all the local excitement, I have not had to delve into my usual supply of 'other' news to fill the pages and so have only just glanced at the intelligence, which arrives via telegraph, and saw that you have been appointed Attorney General of Victoria. I cannot tell you how pleased I am at your success and send my most sincere congratulations on this honour, which is well deserved and rightly granted. It reassures me that we have governments in this country which accurately bestow power to those who can best direct and use it effectively and I am sure the State of Victoria and the country as a whole will benefit from the decisions you will make and the leadership you will provide in your new role.

When I consider how hard you have worked and how focused your public life has been, I can only commend you for your determination. I have long been a follower of Duncan Gillies and was happy to see him elected Premier, and I believe Alfred Deakin to be a superior politician with a long career ahead of him. I think you are in good company Henry and as the push for Federation

grows, I'm sure your intelligence and integrity shall be put to good use to implement much needed change.

I have written to mother telling her your news, as her local paper is not as comprehensive as the Express so I am sure you will hear from her in due course. She will be so proud and you can be sure that her pupils will know by rote the name of the new Attorney General of Victoria.

She moved to Cootamundra to be near my brother John and has opened a school in the town. My younger sisters Matilda and Alice are with her and both teach and assist her, but mother still firmly holds the reigns of the school and nothing short of death will see her absent from her classroom.

John only recently married Emily Vine, just before his forty fourth birthday. I have not met his wife but from all accounts she is a lovely woman and well connected in the district.

My other remaining brother, Thomas, married last year in Gundagai and he is working as a printer on the Gundagai Times – it seems that ink runs through the veins of this family as much as blood.

We are all so scattered these days and I do miss my family, but the children are growing at such a rate, I have little time to ponder fate. Charles is now apprenticed to the paper and William and John assist with its production after school. Alice, ever sensible and old beyond her years, is teaching at Wellington so we only have her presence on weekends and even my youngest Frederick, who is now eight, is able to assist us on Saturdays when we go to print and makes an enthusiastic delivery boy. My youngest daughter Nellie is still at school and undecided about the future as she does not want to teach, which I believe is a good start for every young woman, and her school grades are not encouraging for this vocation, no matter how much I try to extend her knowledge or reading. However, she is a very decorative young woman with a large group of friends and I am sure she will find a suitor earlier rather than later and make a good match. I am learning that you cannot put into your children what God left out. This no longer bothers me as it once did, but I am confident that Charles will carry on the paper after me, although I hope that is a long time in the future.

Your loving cousin

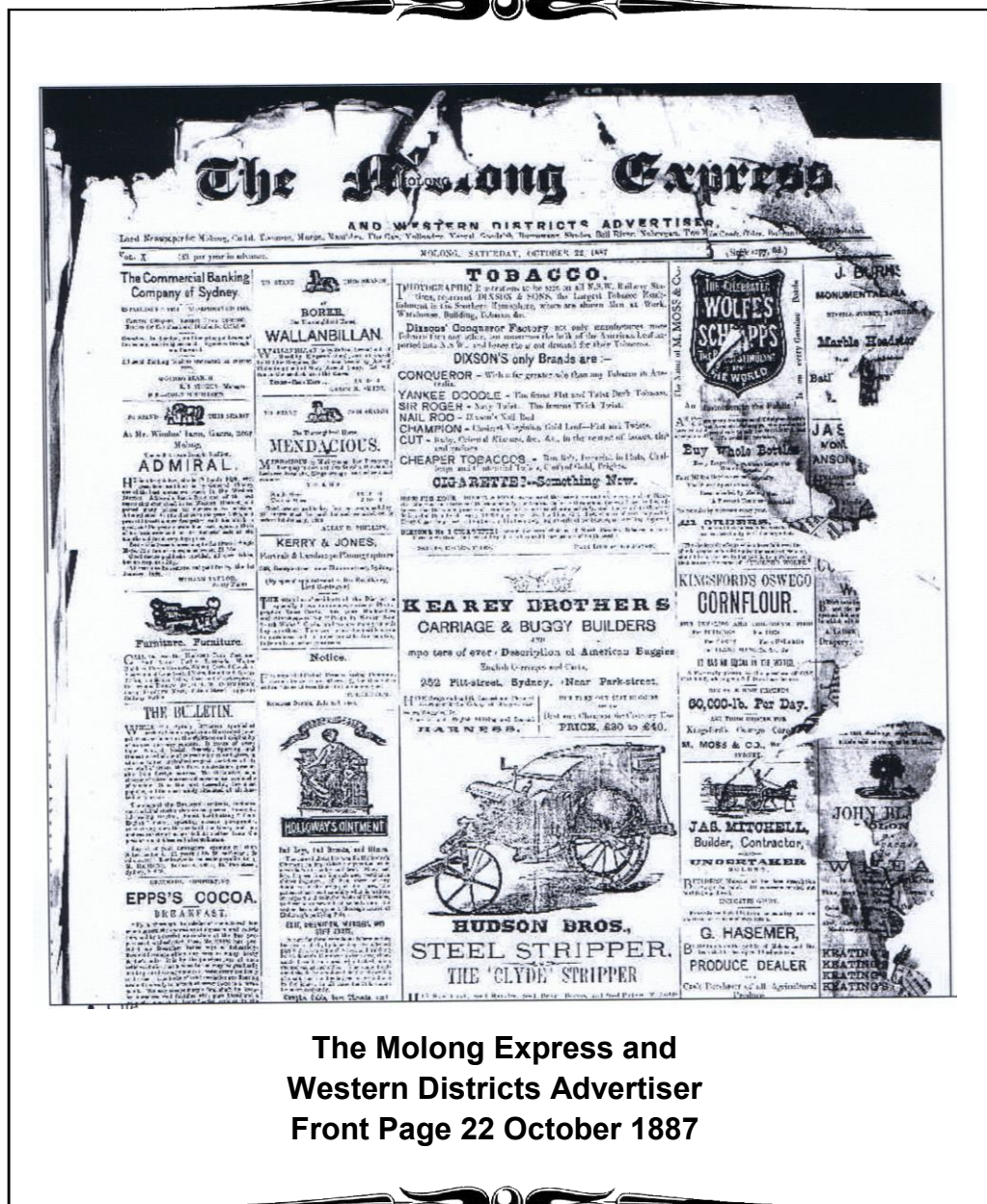
Marion Leathem



When it is stated that 600 feet was the supposed height of the new French tower, rebel readers may be able to conceive the extraordinary magnitude of the work which is being undertaken by the French. The tower, which is to be called after the name of the engineer for the work (Eiffel) is to cost some five or six million francs, of which the French government provide one and a half million and at the end of 50 years the structure is to become the property of the French nation. A lift will be constructed inside the tower, to admit of visitors being drawn to the top. We may expect to hear now and then of romantic suicides, when this wonderful tower is completed.

Molong Express 7 January 1888





The Molong Express and
Western Districts Advertiser
Front Page 22 October 1887

Molong
14 October 1887

Mrs Julia Ratliff
'Valley View'
Wagga Wagga

My dear Julia

I know of no one else I can write to in this mood, so my apologies in advance for inflicting such a letter on you. If I were the true friend I propose to be I would suggest you throw this into the kitchen fire before you read any further but I must vent my frustrations at the events of late somewhere, and you have always been kind enough to hear me out.

The fact is, dear Julia, I feel most defeated at present. All seems to be against me in my work and I fear the favour of the town is against me as well.

In recent times, I have had to put off a compositor who I had engaged to assist me at the Express. He came with good references but I fear he felt that I was easy prey. So often men believe a woman alone is only waiting for another man to come and sweep her off her feet and that she will be grateful with any specimen who is single and of a certain age. With this man, I found his demeanour at first quite respectful and he was certainly competent with his work. I allowed him to make one or two suggestions regarding the layout of the paper and the content and I thought we had developed a good professional situation. I even began to trust his judgment enough for me to ease up my vigilance of the proofing of the paper. In short, I thought I had found a good associate, whom I could trust.

You can imagine how I felt when travelling to Bathurst for a meeting with my contemporaries, to hear that this creature was telling all and sundry that he was a 'sure thing' to take over the paper and that we were involved in a romantic way. Of course, I immediately denied all involvement and was most indignant that people with whom I have worked for nearly eight years could believe such lies. As if I would ever give up my hold on the newspaper when I have fought so long and hard to make it the success it is. Being the only female in the gathering, I was put in a situation most unbecoming where I had to defend my name and my situation and the more I denied the more I could see that they thought my denials were in fact evasions to protect my modesty.

No matter how well they know you, it appears that all men assume that women will always be influenced by romance and are apt to believe the word of another man they barely know over the assurances of a woman they have worked alongside for years and who has done everything to prove her ability and integrity. I used to think Louisa Lawson extreme in her actions to promote the cause of women by denigrating men, but events such as this make me wonder if she has better intuition than I.

I was due to stay for two nights to attend a function of the general store that is a major advertiser, but I feigned a problem at home and travelled back to Molong the next morning to confront this most vile situation.

My early return was fortuitous as I found Mr Edwards asleep in the office and smelling of liquor when he had told me he never touched a drop. I immediately confronted him with the rumours I had heard and could tell by his actions that he was quite guilty. I dismissed him on the spot and told him that I would take legal action if I heard so much as one more untruth about my situation.

He left with much abusive insults and overturned the trays, which had been set up to print later in the day. I was extremely agitated but the ruins of the morning's paper had to be rectified so I got down on my hands and knees, collecting letters from all corners of the office and then spent six hours resetting the type. It was fortuitous I think to have to do this tedious and meticulous work as it put my mind into some sort of order while my heart was so hurt and my anger so strong. I could see Mr Edwards in the doorway of the hotel across the street talking to my current nemesis, Dr Andrew Ross, no doubt spreading more venom and lies. I could not tell Charles about this as he would have taken some physical action against Mr Edwards and I would rather keep my dignity in such matters, but if I were a man I may well have resorted to a more satisfying encounter.

In addition, Dr Ross has taken a very aggressive stance against me for questioning his political attitudes and writes voluminous letters to the paper, which I am obliged to print. If he got wind of something like this, he would blow it out of all proportion and it would be necessary for me to refute the grubby actions of Mr Edwards in print.

I had assumed that after holding the reins of the paper for so long, this job would get easier, but I sometimes think I work harder now than I did when I was first widowed and wrote mainly at night so as not to neglect the children.

I think I am just very tired and worn down with the constants of work and I thought in Mr Edwards I had someone to shoulder some of the load. I should never have trusted him at all, it was just weariness that drove me to seek his confidence. Marriage to Henry never prepared me for the unscrupulous behaviour of men such as this and I realise now how lucky I was to share time with a person of such integrity.

One bright spot in all the proceedings was that Dr Ross arranged for Sir Henry Parkes to come to Molong to lay the foundation stone for the new

hospital, thinking he would score some political consideration. However, Sir Henry recalled that my husband had started the newspaper here and made an effort to make my acquaintance again and talked about his memories of my Henry. We became involved in an animated conversation about past and current events and his acquaintance with my cousin Henry Wrixon, and talked for nearly an hour, while Dr Ross stood on the side lines and cooled his heels. It was a most satisfying moment, even if I have had cause to berate Sir Henry from time to time in the paper, he is an eloquent speaker and an intelligent man.

I am happy to hear that you are well and that Richard's son is doing so well now. Please thank Isabella for letting my mother keep contact with her grandson, even though she has now remarried. Mother has lost too many sons already and I think knowing that her son Richard lives on in her grandson, gives her great joy.

I promise to be more optimistic with my next letter so please now throw this into the fire, and forgive the rantings of

Your loving friend

Marion Leathem



We see that Henry Parkes wants to change the name of New South Wales to Australia.

Molong Express 24 December 1887



Mary Anne Caroline Wrixon Large
Marion's mother ran Ladies Seminary
Colleges in Tumut, Wagga Wagga and
Cootamundra died 1889



MOLONG
3 MAY 1888

MISS ALICE LEATHEM
HILLTOP SCHOOL
WELLINGTON

SAD TO ADVISE GRANDMOTHER DIED THIS MORNING STOP
TRAVELLING TO COOTAMUNDRA FOR FUNERAL WITH NELLIE STOP
WRITING STOP LOVE MOTHER



Something of ourselves

The Cootamundra Herald speaking of the death of Mrs Large says:- Deceased was the mother of 12 children - five sons and seven daughters - nine of whom survive her. Mrs Leathem a widow, now the Proprietress of the Molong Express is a daughter; while the other daughters are Mrs J.B. Elworthy of the Gundagai Times, Mrs Williamson whose husband founded the first evening newspaper (The Star) in Wagga, Mrs. Lowe (whose husband was also connected with the press as an editor) and Miss Matilda and Miss Alice Large. The sons are Mr John Large Cungagong, and Mr Thomas Large, co-proprietor of The Southern Cross Junee.

Molong Express May 19 1888



Riddell Street
Molong
10 May 1888

Mrs James Elworthy
First Avenue
Gundagai

My dear sister Henrietta,

Since returning from mother's funeral, I have occupied myself by writing up an especially spicy and lurid account of the latest "Jack the Ripper" murder in London. The grisly details seem to inspire the readers, mostly the women, who seem to thrive on the number of wounds inflicted, the organs removed and the state of the body when found. You would be surprised how many women come to the office to see if there is any more "news" on "The Ripper" that we are not allowing in the paper, for fear of shocking our more gentle subscribers.

As I was writing this I thought how much mother would have loved the preoccupation of the masses with this murder. For a woman brought up in privileged circumstances, she was quite compassionate about those less fortunate who made their living from irregular means. Perhaps that is why she was so accepting of me being a newspaperwoman!

This poor, unfortunate victim was another product of the slums and I suppose had to do what she could to prevent herself from starving, as it says she was a showgirl. She has at last achieved fame in the manner of her death.

As long as people want to read about the depravity of their fellow humans, I suppose we in the press will accommodate them but it is easy to become hardened to even the most terrible news when it is the steady diet you live on every day.

I hope I do not become totally desensitised to the plight of others but I am no longer surprised at the terrible deeds committed in this world. It could even

be said that I quite enjoy the increased circulation we will achieve with this story - in anticipation, I have ordered an extra fifty copies of The Express run.

I wonder what mother would have thought of that! I will miss her.

Your loving sister

Marion



An Item for the ladies - The "Dawn" is the title of a monthly ladies journal, the first issue of which has just reached us from Sydney and which is one of the neatest looking, most smartly written papers- of the kind that have yet been published in the Australian colonies. The journal is edited by Dora Falconer, and contains 16 pages of varied, original and carefully selected matter. The publication very creditably supplies what has long been a desideratum to Australian women, and we trust that it will be able to maintain the good standard of literature it has adopted and may have a long life. The subscription has been moderately fixed at 3s per annum in advance. The publishing office is at 138 Phillip Street, Sydney.

Molong Express May 26 1888



Molong
31 May 1888

Mrs Louisa Lawson
The Dawn
Pitt Street
Sydney

Dear Mrs Lawson

A copy of The Dawn arrived with the Sydney mail this morning and I wanted to write and congratulate you on a very impressive publication.

As you are from this area yourself, you will be familiar with the total lack of facilities for women in rural environments. In my newspaper I try to accommodate them by including stories and items of interest to women, but the space available only allows a small contribution in this way.

It was refreshing to read a publication which does not pander to the supposed frailties of women by only allowing romantic fiction or domestic advice. The portrayal of real women in real situations is long overdue and I will be recommending it to my readers in our next edition.

I am not sure if you still travel to this part of the world to visit family, but if you are in Molong or passing through, I would enjoy meeting you and perhaps hosting an evening or luncheon for you as there are many women in the district with quite discerning literary tastes who would enjoy your company.

I look forward to my next edition of The Dawn and wish you every success with this publication and thank you for your kind words regarding The Molong Express. Please find enclosed my subscription cheque.

Yours faithfully

Marion Leathem



Louisa Collins, the Borgia of Botany, was hanged at Darlinghurst Gaol in the morning of the 8th of January, after being convicted of poisoning two of her husbands.

Molong Express 8 January 1888

Dr Maguire informs us that typhoid fever is in our midst again, three cases having demanded his attention recently

Molong Express 28 January 1888

MOLONG
9 MARCH 1889

MRS HENRIETTA ELWORTHY
GUNDAGAI TIMES

SHOCKED BY NEWS OF JAMES DEATH STOP SENDING MY EDITOR TO
ASSIST SHORT TERM AS REQUESTED STOP WRITING STOP LOVE
AND CONDOLENCES

MARION LEATHEM



Henrietta Large Elworthy (1846-1915) and James Baker Elworthy (1833-1889) (Courtesy of Devon to Down Under)
Marion's sister and brother in law.

Marion met her husband Henry Leathem when he worked for James Elworthy at The Tumut and Adelong Times.



Gundagai
11 March 1889

Miss Alice Leathem
Hilltop School
Wellington

My dear daughter Alice

It has been a terribly sad time here and I am quite distracted by the depth of Henrietta's grief and inability to cope. Henrietta was only seventeen when she married James and for all James's qualities, encouraging independence in my sister was not one of them. Even at the age of forty three she is like a little girl turning to everyone for advice.

At least she is left very well off so need not worry about money.

I have sent an account of the funeral to Charles for inclusion in the paper as James was widely known and respected across many parts of New South Wales.

Death seems to unite my siblings more and more these days. What a pity we do not get together to celebrate more uplifting events.

We will be back on Friday.

Your loving,

Mother



Alice Vale Leathem Johnston – Marion's eldest daughter - Wearing her mother gold locket which she was given at 16 by her mother.



We note the train left Molong at 6pm and with a two hour stop in Orange, arrives in Sydney at 9am.

Molong Express 27 April 1889



The Molong Express
Riddell Street
Molong
26 October 1889

Sir Henry Parkes
Parliament House
Sydney

Dear Sir Henry,

A short note amongst the many you will no doubt receive sir, congratulating you on the speech you made at Tenterfield this week. The transcript has arrived on my desk this morning and I have prepared the editorial for the paper to convey the common sense reflected in your words.

A combined Commonwealth of Australia is desirable on a number of levels and I am sure it will come about in due course, although possibly more slowly than you or I wish, for the wheels of Westminster turn very slowly and it will take considerable leadership in this country to convince England that we are out of swaddling clothes and well able to govern ourselves.

I was also greatly encouraged by your discussion on the practicality of a common gauge railway system across the states. The short sightedness of different gauges in different states is impractical and totally inconvenient and a subject I have been worrying in my paper for a number of years. The new railway line through Molong has been most welcome but farmers find that the

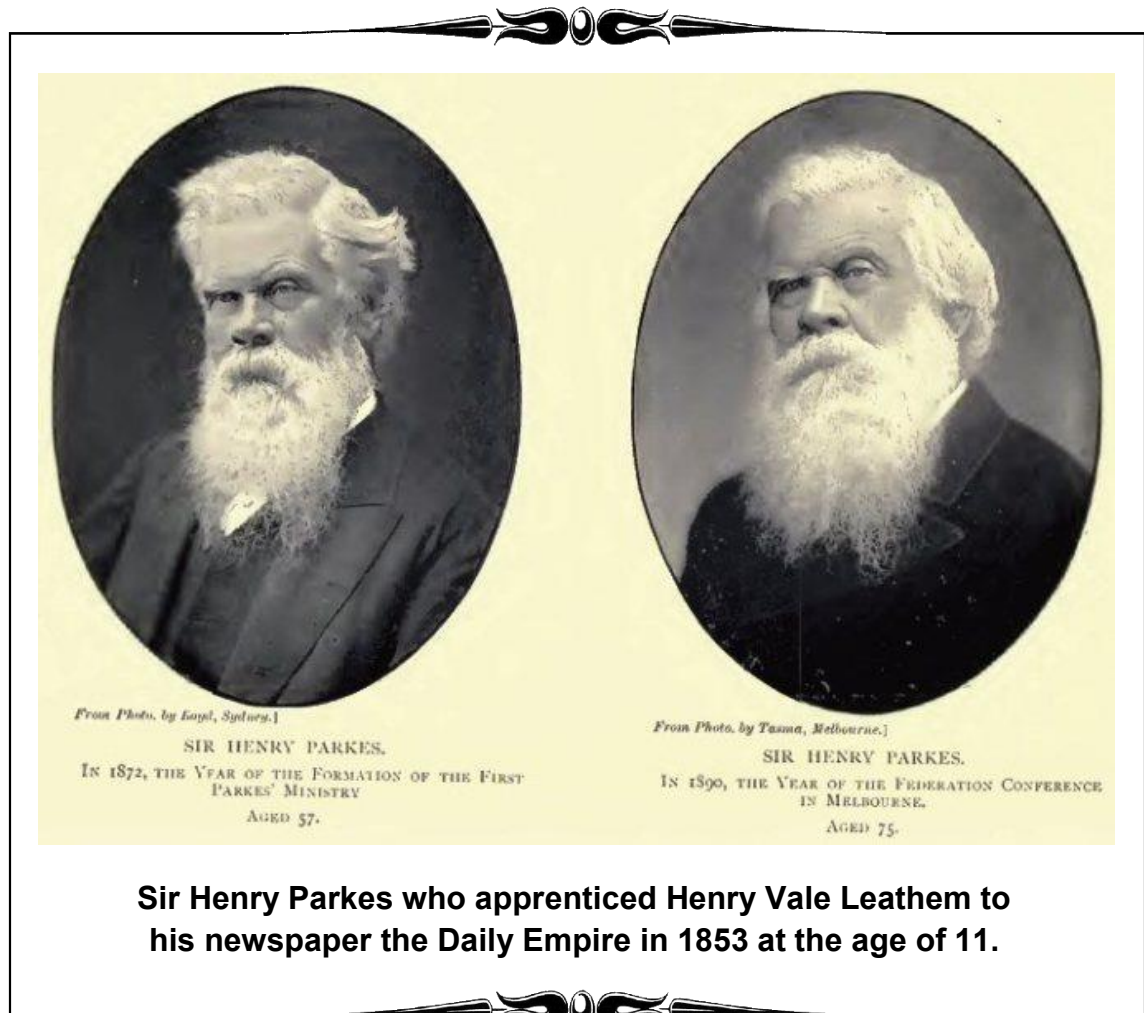
produce they send to markets in other states has rotted in the carriages waiting for transference at borders pending the arrival of local trains. This must be rectified at all costs if this country is to be combined as a single force.

Again I commend you on your words and direction. Although I do not always agree with your politics, as you certainly know, on this occasion I support both of your visions for this country.

I remain

Yours respectfully

Mrs Marion Leathem





Baron Lamington urges that a regiment of British soldiers should be stationed in Victoria maintaining that such a course would be conducive to the loyalty of the colonists. No doubt the noble lord thinks this move would be conducive to the loyalty of the colonists, but in what way does he propose to bring about consummation of an object so desirable from an imperialist standpoint? Does he imagine that a colonial community will be fascinated by the glamour and problematical eclat that would result from the presence of a regiment of British soldiers in the colony?

If he does think so he is very much mistaken, because while there are a few in the colonies who would grovel and toady to anything that was British, quite irrespective of merit; the great bulk of colonials have got beyond that stage. Is it a portion of that military naval system which it was attempted to force on the colonies, and of which the Naval Tribute Bill was a first instalment? If so, the colonies should be watchful or the imperial military system will prove to be a vampire. Sucking the life blood and energy of the young Australian nation. Does the originator of the present proposal know so little of the colonies as to think they can be influenced by such a chimerical idea? They certainly would be influenced, but not in the way hoped for.

Molong Express June 29 1889



The Molong Express
Molong
16 April 1890

Miss Camilla M Hughes
Matron
Molong Hospital

Dear Matron Hughes,

I will accord you a formal welcome in the Express to wish you success in your new position, but I wanted to write personally to you as well to extend the hand of friendship in your new town.

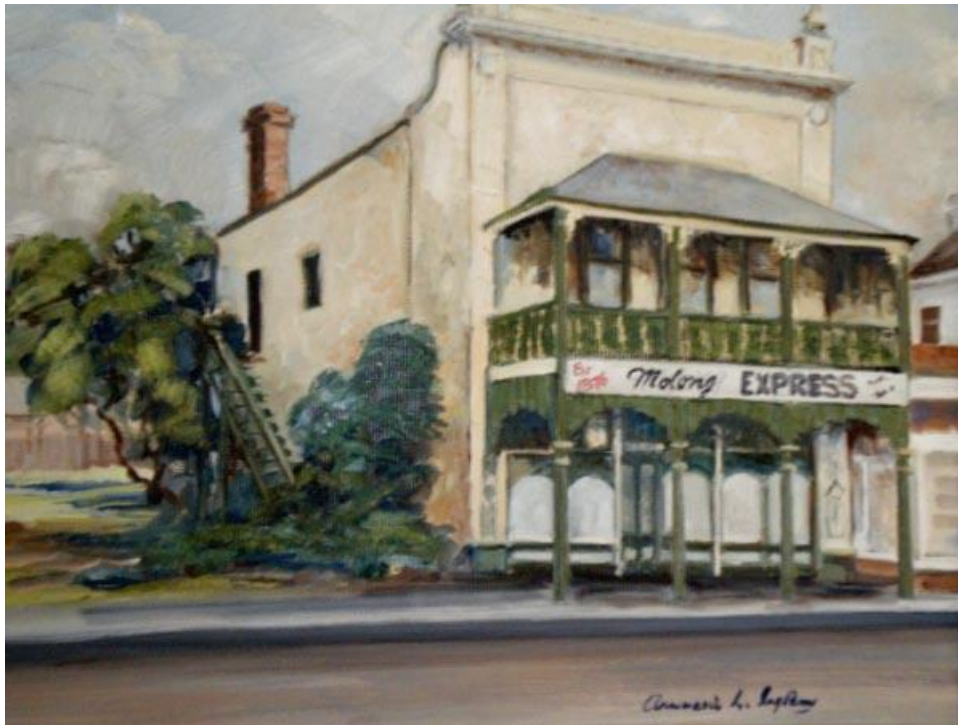
It is gratifying to have a person of your skill and competence as our matron and I offer you space in the newspaper to support any causes you wish to bring to the attention of the readers. You will find there is some resistance to what the locals describe as “new-fangled” medicine, but I strongly urge you to not be disheartened by any perceived opposition and start off as you mean to continue.

Being the daughter of a surgeon, I am very aware of the need to adopt new techniques and I will do what I can to assist you in educating the population in any way you see fit.

I look forward to making your acquaintance and offer you the benefit of my experience as a professional woman in this town. I hope that Molong will become a home to you as much as it has become so to me.

With great respect

Mrs Marion Leathem



**The Molong Express Office
from a painting by Anne Marie Ingham.
Property of Mrs June Marion Murray, great granddaughter
of Marion Leathem.
Painted for the centenary of the Molong Express 1976
– photo Diane Murray**

Mr Pasteur wants to rope in the £25,000 offered by
Minister Abigail for the best kind of wholesale rabbit
slaughtering invention

Molong Express 23 January 1888



Molong Express
Riddell Street
Molong

Dr Andrew Ross
Molong Argus Newspaper
Molong

Dear Dr Ross,

I am writing today to congratulate you on the opening of your new paper, the Argus. Although I am a little bewildered at this move on your part, I more than welcome the opposition of another paper in this town, as to my mind all competition is healthy and the readers can already gauge the level of your journalism by the front page of your first edition.

When I heard you were to be our opposition, I was intrigued at what you would write, but now I see that you wish to present a comic to the townsfolk. I am not sure that people will want to read a one sided account of what their member is presenting in a newspaper edited by his paid lackey, Mr Anderson. To my mind, journalism is about impartiality and truth but there are I am sure, a handful of people in the district who, not having any acquaintance of either, will buy the Argus.

Now that you have thrown down the gauntlet, I look forward to the challenge of integrity winning over common gossip and may the best woman win.

With respect

Mrs Marion Leathem

Proprietress Molong Express



Just Fancy! The Premier has declined the honour of a banquet at St Leonards. The champagne or the caterer must be very bad down that way - or is Sir Henry in too much clover all at once.

Molong Express October 13 1888



Molong Express
Riddell Street
Molong
16 November 1890

Mr Arthur Elworthy
Gundagai Times
Gundagai

Dear Arthur

I write in response to your letter expressing concern at the presence of an opposition newspaper in Molong.

Although I was at first troubled by the possible loss of readership, as we are a small town and the population is limited, I am finding to my delight that people who feel for whatever reasons that they must buy a copy of The Argus usually also buy a copy of the Express to see the opposing view.

Our circulation is greater than the Argus and it has taken us ten years to achieve this, so I am annoyed that Dr Ross will be able to use the goodwill I have built up with the local people to promote his own paper.

I have taken some measures to combat this onslaught, one being the engagement of a new editor from Sydney who writes very good and cutting copy. The other is to elegantly refute any comments raised in the Argus as if they were the mere taunts of a spoilt child, which they often are, and to handle them in a dignified manner, which shows how unconcerned we are about this interloper.

I know that your father had opposition newspapers to challenge the Times and that he survived intact and I will do the same. There will always be readers who prefer the biased gossip which reflects their own views but they are not readers I would want to have. The most damaging aspect is the split in advertising funds from our local businesses. Most of them are aware that Dr Ross can wield political power which may have adverse effects on their businesses and so feel they need to advertise in both papers, I'm sure this will settle in time, but as a precaution we are increasing our commercial printing business to take in the various small surrounding towns. Our rates are more competitive and the Albion is still the fastest and best press in the Central West, so we have that advantage.

I have had some very encouraging and sympathetic letters from my contemporaries in Bathurst, Parkes, Wellington and Orange who have all run afoul of Dr Ross at times.

On a brighter note, news of your accomplishments is spreading through the local papers in this area and any concerns of editors who thought you too young to step into your father's shoes are rapidly being revised. The vicissitudes to the Times are well received by others in the trade so do not be discouraged by the local opposition to change. When I stepped into my role here after Henry died, I was met with mixed opposition from those who thought me too inexperienced. It was the subtle changes that made readers understand I was not just following on standing traditions but had something unique and original to offer them as well. Never be afraid to challenge tradition.

Although it was originally difficult for me to think of someone I had cared for as a baby being a contemporary, I see you have the fine brain and wits of both your father and your grandfather Large. The Gundagai Times is in capable hands and I look forward to a business relationship with you such as I had with your father.

I shall keep you informed on the progress and look forward to a visit from your mother next month when she goes to visit our sister Maria at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney. I understand your concerns about her

loneliness but I keep in touch with her regularly and I assure you that she is doing very well and a move to Grafton, although seemingly drastic, may well be the change she needs and the chance for you and your new wife to make your own mark on Gundagai without worrying about the welfare of your mother.

With thanks for your concern, your loving aunt,

Marion Leathem



A quartette of drunks this week. Prospects look a little brighter.

For loosely wagging a foul tongue in public on the 28th, W. Ward had to part with the price of 30 drinks and to stop alone in an unfurnished apartment for 7 days. This is as it should be - and often - should have previously been in this town.

A drunken war dance performed in Bank Street on Thursday by one Charlie Gilbert whilst armed with a road metal and a stirrup iron, was estimated by our PM yesterday to be a breach of license valued at 20s or 7 days imprisonment. Charles through necessity took the latter.

Molong Express July 28 1888



Molong
7 December 1890

Mrs Cecelia Williamson
Gurwood Street
Wagga Wagga

My dearest sister, Cecelia

Thank you for your kind letter and your solicitous remarks regarding our welfare.

It was remiss of me not to let you know about our safety but I was not aware that news of the flood, which swept through this town, had travelled so widely. The Molong townsfolk were certainly put out by the disaster, in fact the whole town was under a vast amount of water but no lives were lost.

Our newspaper did not fare too well – as the waters were rising quickly, we managed to relocate all our goods to the upper level of the building but time ran out before we could relocate all the back issues of the Express and these were swept away with the rising waters, though we found a lot of them wrapped soggy around the black legs of the Albion Press which was too heavy to move

This to me is more of a tragedy than any other as all those papers were the effort of Henry and more recently Charles and myself. I felt that a large part of my life had been washed away forever, as indeed it has.

Starting with Frederick's birth when we first arrived, I thought my husband was vain in putting the birth of our child into the newspaper he wrote and edited, but he convinced me that news of any sort has merit and that all the large events of the world are tied up with all the small and that the birth of a son may one day be an event that historians would refer to as evidence of the existence of the person to whom their research was devoted. At the time I recall thinking that my husband was just trying to fill in a little vacant column space with gossip, but I have seen how the events of this district are noted and used by the population to remain connected with the others in the area and how they have often used the paper as a vessel for conveying news I would otherwise have to write laboriously to many others.

I, who due to my profession should not be a stranger to the power of the newspaper, am often awed by the speed by which news travels when couched in the columns of a newspaper. When I think that mother had to rely on the transport ships to bring news from Ireland that at best was four months old, whereas we, with the telegraph, have access to what is happening across the world the next day.

One good thing about the flood, if you won't think me too much the opportunist, is that nearly all the shops have lost their printed matter so we have been commissioned to reprint all the forms and letterheads for the banks and the local businesses and we received a vast order of paper, card and ink from Wimbles in response to a telegram I sent to the owner. It was accompanied by a basket of beautiful tinned goods and a kind, supportive note from Mr Wimble and this, in some ways, was more welcome than the supplies he sent.

Nellie is now fifteen years old and is a sweet young thing, although abominably vain, and is at the centre of any gathering. I will this year direct her into some useful purpose, although I have not yet decided on what. Frederick, who is such a sturdy little chap, is apprenticed to the paper and although he is fond of practical jokes, he seems to have a good compositor's brain. He broke the chamber pot from my commode set last week through being careless and by way of reprimand I bade him go to the store and buy a new one, thinking it might shame him into more sensible actions in future. You can imagine my horror when I saw him walking down the street from Mr Haslam's store with the newly purchased item sitting atop his head, lifting it in salute to ladies he passed.

Charles, John and William are more serious and of course Alice was already an adult when she was born and we muddle along well together. Now they are all young adults, I feel I can breathe a little more easily in my role of mother, for the hard work is now passed and I am sure the years ahead will be easier, which will be most welcome.

Give my regards to the children and Mr Williamson and tell him I admired his letter in the Wimbles Reminder about the falling quality of journalistic writing in the Sydney papers. We sadly see it first hand in applicants who apply for positions for the Express.

you are often in the thoughts of your

Loving sister

Marion



The Molong Express
Gidley Street
Molong
6 December 1890

Mr W H Gardner
Commercial Bank
Bank Street
Molong

Dear Mr Gardner

I write in relation to our current claim with you for damage to our premises and stock during the recent flood.

Attached please find a list of all the items which we have found to be damaged or washed away with the floodwater and copies of letters to our suppliers requesting replacement stock at expedited delivery costs.

Our greatest loss by far was the collection of old editions of the paper, going back to the founding copy in 1876. Can you please advise if we can make any claim on these, as they really do not have a monetary value but very much an historical and commercial value to the local council and suppliers?

I would appreciate your advice on this in due course and your cheque in payment of the claim as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marion Leathem

Proprietress



Gas Works for Molong

Gasworks erected complete, capable of producing 15,000 cubic feet per day.

Estimate of consumption of gas

9 hotels, 12 lights for hours	2700
5 churches 50 lights for 1 hour	1250
2 halls, 15 lights for 2 hours	300
1 post office 6 lights for 4 hours	120
1 railways station 20 lights for 6 hours	600
1 lockup & police barracks 10 lights 6 hours	300
2 banks 4 lights for 4 hours	160
3 butchers, 6 lights for 4 hours	360
1 public school & house 3 lights for 3 hours	45
1 private school 12 lights for 3 hours	180
1 convent 4 lights for 4 hours	80
2 stores 30 lights for 1 and half hours	450
20 shops 3 lights for 3 hours	900
50 private homes 2 lights for 3 hours	1500
1 printing office 6 lights for 2 hours	60
30 public lamps 1 light for 10 hours	1560

Total daily consumption 10505 cubic feet

The Molong Express 21 November 1891



Bank Street
Molong
December 1892

Miss Hannaford's School for Young Ladies
Pitt Street
Sydney

Dear Miss Hannaford

I am enquiring about a place for my daughter Helen, aged sixteen years, to attend a residential course on domestic science.

She is currently living in Molong and has been brought up with exemplary manners in a refined household, but small towns offer limited options. My

daughter does not wish to pursue teaching as her sister has done nor become involved in the world of commerce in our family newspaper.

Can you please send me a schedule of your autumn and winter courses and let me know the type of accommodation available. My daughter is a country girl and I would like to know if she will be sharing a room and what type of restrictions you have on her free hours, outside the school.

You come recommended by Mrs MacSmith of Molong, whose daughter Margaret attended your establishment last year. Mrs MacSmith was very pleased with the level of attention afforded Margaret and I was impressed with her knowledge of domestic issues when she returned to Molong.

I am looking for an establishment with firm discipline and Christian principles so I would welcome your assurance on these items.

I look forward to your response and advice on vacancies and a schedule of your fees, as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marion Leathem



Molong Express Office
Riddell Street
Molong
3 April 1892

Mr John Dalton
Dalton Bros
Summer Street
Orange

Dear Mr Dalton

It was very good of you to attend our office last Friday in person on your way to Wellington and it was a pleasure to meet your wife and sons.

You will understand the importance of new blood and ideas in an existing family business and in this light I would like to advise you that Mr Charles

Leathem, my eldest son will now be handling all advertising copy for the paper. He has in fact been looking after this area of the paper, under my guidance, for the past twelve months and I have been impressed with his diligence and attention.

In future, if you have any questions in respect to the layout size or content of your advertisements, Charles will be happy to assist you and I of course am always available for consultation and approval of all final copy before it goes to press.

I had reason to be in Orange yesterday and wanted to say I was impressed with the new colour displays you have in your windows. They enhance the presentation greatly and I am pleased you have entrusted your display printing to our office now that we can provide a large format press.

I look forward to a long relationship with Dalton Bros and would be happy to assist you in bringing any new printing ideas to fruition.

I am attaching you latest monthly account. You will notice that I have provided a discount of ten per cent on the latest order of sales docket books as a mark of goodwill and as a way of thanking you for your continued business.

Yours faithfully

(Mrs) Marion Leathem.

Proprietress



**Molong Express and Western Districts Advertiser
Front Page - 24 May 1890**

Riddell Street
Molong
15 May 1892

Sir Henry Wrixon
"Raheen"
Studley Park Rd
Kew

My dear Sir Henry – of course I had to use the salutation.

I was most pleased to hear about your knighthood this past week and felt I must write at once and offer you my most sincere congratulations. I've

always had a great respect for your integrity and honour and felt especially proud to be your cousin, after following your successes in the Ah Toy case. Your father would be so proud, I am sure he will be standing beside you in spirit when you receive this great honour from our dear Queen Victoria.

Although, like me, you were born in Ireland, your devotion to this colony is tangible and I often wonder if the possibilities we have in this country would have been available to us if our parents had chosen to stay in the old country.

I'm not sure that a woman such as I would have been able to so unbiasedly run a business like my newspaper if I had been widowed in Cork rather than Molong. Although they are dead, I often mentally thank my mother for pushing father to come to Australia. Though they originally travelled here to assist father's health, I'm sure the life they found here did more to sustain them than the weather. Perhaps father would have liked to return home towards the end of his days, especially when his circumstances became so difficult, but mother never expressed even a slight desire for Ireland and until her death always said the move to this colony was the best decision they ever made.

Please do pass on my best wishes and congratulations to your wife. I have heard from Henrietta all about your splendid 'Raheen' when she was passing through on her roundabout way to Queensland after her husband James died. She so enjoyed her time with you and talked extensively about the grounds and the view across the river in the evening and the afternoon teas in the rose gardens.

Now that my son Charles has the paper firmly under control and we are fortunate to have a very competent editor in our employ, I am freer to travel than I have been since I first came to Molong. I am planning a trip to Melbourne mid next year to attend the newspaper conference at The Exhibition Centre. Please let me know if you will be in the city at that time as I had hoped we might spend some time together if your schedule allows it. I will be staying at the Windsor and can, within reason, organise my plans around your availability.

I do look forward to seeing you again, dear Henry and once again acknowledge your contribution to this colony and its people and add my congratulations to those who are able to grant you a higher accolade than

Your respectful cousin

Marion Leathem



“Raheen” (little fort in Gaelic), built in 1870 at Studley Park Rd Kew, was the home of Sir Henry and Lady Wrixon until it was sold to the Catholic Church in 1917 and was used as the residence for Archbishop Daniel Mannix. It was purchased by Richard and Jeanne Pratt in 1981 who have restored it meticulously to its original style.

Riddell Street
Molong
3 August 1892

Matron Camilla Hughes
Molong Cottage Hospital

Dear Matron Hughes

Yesterday I had reason to visit the hospital for an interview with Mr Dalziel who injured himself as a result of a fall from his horse. I wanted to commend you on the excellent job you have done in lifting the standards of hygiene and discipline in our community hospital and I am pleased that we have your expertise at the helm.

I have always thought nursing a worthy profession for a woman, indeed, I had considered taking it up myself before I married. I strongly believe that all women should be able to support themselves in this world. For this reason I was hoping you may be able to assist me in finding a place for my daughter Helen to train.

I believe she would benefit from the structured discipline and training and I would like to see her apply her common sense to an agenda that is not solely governed by pleasurable pursuits. She has a good mind and is a likeable girl who gets on well with people and I believe her cheerfulness may be beneficial to patients who are feeling unwell or disheartened.

I hope that I may bring Helen to see you later this week at a time of your convenience to discuss her suitability. We could use the time to discuss the fund raising campaign you would like to run in The Express.

I look forward to speaking with you further.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Marion Leathem



The ordinary meeting of the Council was held on Tuesday. There was a lot of talk indulged in, but business was not by any means extensive.

Molong Express November 18, 1892



Riddell Street
5 December 1892

Matron Hughes
Cottage Hospital
Molong

Dear Matron Hughes,

This is a formal apology for my hasty words yesterday concerning Helen's dismissal from your staff.

After questioning her closely last night, I find that she had not told me the entire truth about the events and I have reprimanded her for her tardiness and dishonesty.

I thank you for your tact and discretion and apologise for lacking that quality myself when confronted with something I had not wished to hear. I do not often jump to conclusions, but in matters concerning one's children it is easy to be blinkered, and Helen's values are obviously easily swayed by young men with silver tongues. Rest assured, her misdemeanours will be addressed and I am confident you will have an apology and a reassurance of this directly from Helen tomorrow.

I understand completely your actions and hope that we may remain friends.

With great respect

Mrs Marion Leathem



What I'd Like to Know:- How is it when our mails were brought by horses we got our Sydney letters and papers every day and now we have the train we are without them two and three days a week?



The Molong Express
Riddell Street
Molong
7 January 1893

Mr Joseph Haslam
Molong General Store
Molong

Dear Mr Haslam

It is unfortunate that I need to write to you rather than see you in person, but as you seem to be terribly busy whenever I call into your premises or pass you in the street, I thought perhaps seeing my name at the bottom of a letter from the Express might jog your memory to finalise your outstanding printing and advertising account.

I understand that financially, business is difficult in this time of unemployment, pending the Free Trade Agreement promised by the politicians, and the increasing number of itinerants by the river each night, remind us all that the effects of these times are far flung. However, your account has remain unpaid for sixty days and common courtesy, if not our friendship would dictate that you call on me to discuss some arrangement of payment until the debt is cleared.

Until I hear from you we will not continue to display your advertisement in the Express, although I notice your copy arrives each week, even if your cheque does not.

Mr Dalton of Orange is looking for increased advertising space, so if I have not heard from you by Friday's deadline, I will assume you accept that I must provide the space to him.

A friendship outside of business only exists when each party is totally assured of the integrity of the other.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marion Leathem



TO EVERYBODY

"LET THIS BE COPIED OUT

And kept safe for our remembrance" King John Act v., sc 2.

Correspondence is invited on all matters of general interest. We will be glad to receive items of news, reports or concerts, parties, social mems, double-headed calf paragraphs, snake yarns, poems, pumpkin pars &c, &c, from all parts of the district. Queries and replies are solicited and we only impose these easy conditions:-

Do not write unless you have something to say.

Do not write unless you say what you have got to say in a friendly way, as nothing written in a cantankerous spirit will appear in the journal if we can help it.

Do not write on both sides of the paper.

Do not write on either side unless you feel you must.

Do not write anything unjust or libellous, as it will contaminate the other contents of the waste paper basket.

Do not write for a reply privately through the post because we are busy.

Do not write and expect us to endorse your opinions every time as they may not be our opinions.

Do not get impatient with us under any circumstances, because we do not deserve it. If you do, in that case, as in every other one, BE BRIEF and address

THE EDITOR

The Molong Express 1893



Raheen
Studley Park Rd
Kew
29 August 1893

Mr Charles Leathem
The Molong Express
Riddell Street
Molong

My dear Charles

I know you have been forwarding correspondence to me at The Windsor, but my cousin Henry and his wife have insisted I stay at their home and I was rather pleased to take them up on their offer. The grandeur of the Windsor, and it is rather grand, does not take the place of kith and kin and no amount of gilding and tapestry can replace good intelligent conversation.

Until this week, I had forgotten how much I enjoyed Henry's company and conversation. He is an intelligent and witty man and has much to say on many topics, not all in agreement with my own ideas, but it is challenging to be with someone who does not pander to me because of my age or gender and I revel in his dreams for the future of this country. He is closely aligned with Sir Henry Parkes on the plans for a federation and his patriotism and enthusiasm are like a tonic. I had forgotten how small the thoughts are of people in the country, concerned as they are with crops and stock prices and the building of rural rail links. Here the discussion is about the future of the nation and the working of government and the possibilities for Australia in general and our place in the world.

His wife Charlotte sits quietly by the fire, executing her exquisite embroidery, and intervenes when our raised voices threaten to wake the servants upstairs. It is certainly stimulating to be able to exchange views with some of the leaders of this country who are frequent guests at this house. Last night we dined with Mr Alfred Deakin and Mr Anderson of the Age and I wished I could have been taking notes for the paper, How those words would have

fired up the farmers in our district and made them realise their issues are small in comparison to the plight of the rest of the world.

At Charlotte's insistence I am extending my stay for another week and I'm sure you will enjoy the opportunity to execute your own ideas in relation to the Express without my interference, however, I would urge your caution on extending any further credit to our advertisers as I believe these economic times are destined to stay with us a little longer. Mr John Quick, who is also committed to the federation and recently attended a Constitutional Convention with Henry Wrixon at Corowa said that it would be well for all in business to keep a close watch on their purse and a shotgun at the ready to be prepared for the times ahead. He is such a reasonable man, that words such as that carry more weight when he speaks them, so I am prepared to heed his warning.

I was telling Mr Quick about "The Burgon" sheep shearing machine. Would you please be able to send down the page with this article from the Express to him, care of Sir Henry?

I trust all is well and look forward to seeing the editions produced in my absence.

Your loving

Mother



Raheen
Studley Park Rd
Kew
3 September 1893

Miss Helen Leathem
Molong Express
Molong

Dear Nellie,

I am greatly distressed by the letter you have sent me and wish you had acquainted me with these facts before I left Molong.

Although I do not dislike Mr Phillips, he is almost twice your age, you have known him only a short time and he is totally unsuitable as a husband for you. I do not give you permission to be married and you must understand that as you are barely eighteen you need my permission. It is presumptuous on your part to assume that because you have taken it into your head to be married, that we will all fall into agreement.

I also do not understand your desire to travel to Freemantle. From all accounts it is little more than a mining community and is no place for a woman of your age. If Mr Phillips really cares for you, he will be prepared to go there on his own and return once he has made the fortune he thinks he will make. You will by then be a little older and more able to determine if you still think he should be your partner in life.

Your letter has greatly troubled my mind and I am leaving here tomorrow, though I had intended to stay another few days. We will discuss this more upon my return but I have no intention of giving permission for something which I know to be the wrong decision. You have always been too impulsive for your own good, and in this case I do know what is best for you.

I am not being harsh Nellie, I am merely bringing some much needed common sense to this matter which can only end in disaster if pursued.

May God make you understand that your welfare is the only concern of

Your loving

Mother



Social Mems.

On Monday, 25th September, a quiet but pleasant wedding was celebrated at the residence of Mrs. H. V. Leathem, proprietress of this paper. The bride was that lady's youngest daughter (Helen Isabel), who had been reared in this town, and the bridegroom, Mr Alfred Phillips. The

ceremony was performed in the presence of several of the bride's relatives and friends by the Rev. J Alldis, who subsequently addressed a few friendly words to the happy couple and proposed their health, which was drunk with enthusiasm by the friends assembled. Mr. & Mrs. Phillips left Molong by the evening's train for Sydney EN ROUTE to Western Australia. On the local platform was congregated an immense crowd of intimate acquaintances of the newly-made wife, who accorded her and her husband a warm reception on the platform with the customary showers of rice, and extended to them a very hearty send-off.

The Molong Express 7th October 1893.



Helen Isabelle Leathem (Nellie) (1876-1943)
Marion's youngest daughter and Alfred Phillips
On their wedding day Molong 1893



Bank Street
Molong
30 September 1893

Mrs Alfred Phillips
C/- Watsons Hotel
Perth
Western Australia

My dearest Nellie

I am sending you the current edition of the Express with an account of your marriage and some letters, which arrived for you after you had left Molong. Some of these I am sure will contain cheques from my family so I trust that they will allow you to comfortably set up your home.

Please let me know your address as soon as you have settled in as there are a great many people who want to correspond with you and hear about the West first hand. It seems that Fremantle is a popular destination for miners and labourers alike, so perhaps Mr Phillips was right, as the goldfields there are promising to be some of the most lucrative in the colony.

I was minded, as I sat down to write you, of how badly my mother must have felt when first Maria Elizabeth and then I moved away from home. I looked at our travel to Gundagai, thirty miles from Tumut, as an adventure, and our move to Molong was a distance so vast that I wondered if I would ever see my parents again. Now that you have moved to the other side of this large country, I am reminded that distances get less with the more efficient forms of travel available to us, and perhaps Perth is not so far away at all. Charles and Jack seem quite keen to travel over to see you but I'm not sure the paper can spare them both at the same time, but that is for the future.

When you first told me of your intention to marry, I was worried that you may be too young to take this step, but your circumstances dictate this action and I must now accept you as an adult.

I have never tried to be friends with my children, preferring the traditional relationship of parent and child which fosters security and respect, but now

that you are married, Nellie, the first of my children to be married, I hope that we may be able to redefine our relationship through written correspondence, which can be read non judgementally, rather than the spoken word which is often misinterpreted when passed between mother and daughter.

There are many questions which will arise for you through these early months of your marriage and what is to come, so I hope you will feel comfortable enough to ask me anything you want to know about your new life. Although we spoke at length the night before you went away, there are no words to prepare you for living with a person who has only before been a friend. Co-habitation requires compromise and patience, especially on the part of the woman. What is romantic and alluring in the first weeks of marriage soon becomes tiresome drudgery, especially when you have no female acquaintances yet with whom to share your thoughts. I urge you to exercise patience and think before you speak in all matters of importance in your marriage. It is easy to say words that once said have the power to erode affection and these words can never be forgotten. Try only to speak on the positives of your relationship to Mr Phillips and avoid judgements on his actions and words, for we all have faults.

And Nellie, try to make friends of your own in your new town. When I came to Molong I joined quilting guilds, though I loathe quilting, and the Ladies Aid, just to engage in contact with other women like myself, for to be totally dependent on your husband for all conversation and social activity is a path to resentment. It is important to build a life for yourself beside your husband rather than just stand in his shadow and accept what comes your way. You are an intelligent and enchanting young woman and you will find that people are receptive to any new comer who tries to understand the local customs and become part of their lives. But you need to keep your mind informed and your body active. There is no scope for growth in being a woman whose sole purpose is in staying at home and waiting for her husband to return each evening. It is important for us to develop our brains to remain interesting and interested. A man needs to return at night to a woman who can talk about more than the cooking and the price of groceries and a woman owes it to herself to be acquainted with what is happening in the world.

I know you want to make a success of your marriage but you will do that best by being content within yourself. Eat properly and get plenty of rest, especially now, and take a walk each day. My father was a great believer in exercise. And keep a positive mind for that above all will sustain you.

Please know Nellie that I am here for any advice, no matter how intimate it may seem, for as women we all experience situations which seem unusual and embarrassing. There is nothing you can ask me of which you need be ashamed and I welcome the chance to make your acquaintance through the letters we write to each other.

We all send our love and blessings to you Nellie and each night I pray for you and your wellbeing in your new life and home. Please know that as long as I am alive, you will always have a home here.

My best wishes to Mr Phillips and my dearest love to you. That God love and watch over you and keep you safe is the sincerest wish of

Your loving

Mother.



Molong Express
8 October 1893

Mrs George McKenzie
"Wilgaroon"
via Molong

Dear Mrs McKenzie

The many letters to the Editor, deriding our local publicans and written anonymously, are obviously from you, as we recognise your handwriting from all the other tirades you have sent over the years.

I have no issue with publishing your letters if they address anything of interest, in fact we always welcome new material, but frustration with your husband and his drinking is not the fault of the hotelier, it is the fault of your husband and I would not wish to embarrass you by allowing readers to know the deplorable details of your marital incompatibilities.

Instead of spending your time writing letters bordering on the libellous, can I suggest instead cleaning the house, washing your clothes, disciplining your children and wearing an occasional smile may encourage your husband to stay at home each evening. It is my opinion that women may only legitimately complain about the faults of their husband if their own life is lived in an exemplary manner.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marion Leathem



What we'd like to see:- The army of tramps now wandering through the land - of men forced into idleness - disappear: and an era of prosperity for all set in. We have felt the effects of depression long enough.

Molong Express Editorial 14 October 1893



The Molong Express
Bank Street
Molong
26 October 1893

Mr F Shield
Builder and Undertaker
Edward Street
Molong

Dear Mr Shield

I understand that you are advertising now in the Molong Argus. This is your choice, of course although their circulation is far less than that of the Express and their rates lower, as they reach a less discerning type of reader.

It would be appreciated if you could finalise your account with us by the end of this week as the credit we have so generously afforded you in the past was in return for your advertising loyalty. As this loyalty appears to no longer exist on your part, I feel we have no choice but to insist on payment before Friday.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Marion Leathem



The cow catcher on our train caught and killed a cow yesterday morning. The cow deserved to die, if it was too slow to race our train.

The Molong Express



Bank Street
Molong
September 1893

Mrs A Phillips
C/- Freemantle Hotel
Freemantle
West Australia

My dear Nellie

Thank you for your letter which arrived this morning. I am sorry to hear you have not been well but in the circumstances I think that this is perhaps for the best.

The long trip and sea voyage and the exertions around your wedding have probably contributed to the miscarriage, which are common in all first pregnancies.

I do urge you to visit a doctor as soon as you can however, as there are sometimes underlying medical conditions present which can cause problems for future conception. I understand your reluctance and shyness in this, but let me assure you that as a mother of six and the daughter of a doctor, a woman must subject herself to this type of attention throughout her childbearing life and most doctors are totally immune to the female body, seeing it as just another piece of flesh, much as a slab of meat before roasting.

I understand your second thoughts on your move to Western Australia and the conditions which accorded it, but I do not need to remind you of the conversations we had before your wedding and the solemnity of your wedding vows. Womanhood has many pleasures but those pleasures carry responsibility and commitment and I trust that I have brought you up well enough to understand this.

Do take care of yourself over the next few weeks and do not exert yourself more than you have to. I am sorry you are on your own and feeling lonely and homesick but again, we discussed this at length before you made the decision to travel there with Mr Phillip.

It is the responsibility of each of us to make our own life happy and fulfilling. I urge you to do this sooner rather than later.

Your loving

Mother



Promiscuous Pars

Mr. O'Sullivan MP says he would sooner see women exercising the franchise than the thousands of men whom he sees voting.

So would we.



Bank Street
Molong
3rd April 1894

Mrs Alfred Phillips
Swan Street
North Fremantle

My dearest Nellie

I trust that all is well with you in Fremantle and that the heat and humidity have eased. Living near the sea has many benefits but the humidity is not one of them. I understand that there is a regular cooling wind which comes in each afternoon to ease conditions and I hope you benefit from it.

I hope that Mr Phillips is finding some payable gold, but tell him there is no shame in trying another profession. I understand there is considerable opportunity for work in Fremantle with the new harbour under construction and the gold rush in full swing. Mining is a difficult and fickle way to make a living and perhaps you should be influencing your husband to try his hand in another field. I am cabling funds to the post Office to assist you in purchasing food and supplies for yourself but Mr Phillips must understand that supporting a wife is his responsibility. It is up to you to set the rules regarding how you should be kept and some men need constant reminding of their duties.

Your sister Alice is planning a trip to visit you. It is a long journey for a young woman on her own so I am suggesting that your brother William accompany her. I am sure Alice will write you separately about this, if she has not already done so.

Dr Ross continues his campaign against the Express but I think most people now have chosen their sides, knowing The Molong Argus is an instrument for his own voice. With the advent of the Free Trade Agreement the

constituents are being made to see how they will be affected and we are all hoping for an end to this prolonged depression.

I enclose an article from last week's paper which is self explanatory. Although we both sustained burns, they are healing well and we shall all be more diligent around fire in the future.

All here ask after you on a regular basis and I'm sure many correspond so I will not trouble you with local events.

I trust all is well with you Nellie and that you are happy. Your letters seem to tell me what you think I want to hear rather than what is actually happening. I am no stranger to adversity and I would prefer an honest account of your situation so that I may best understand how to advise you. There is no shame in asking for advice and there is no obligation to take it if given, but often a more experienced opinion can shed light on our daily trials.

I wish only for your best welfare and happiness and would be happy to write to Mr Phillips if you feel he might need a little prodding.

That God keep you well and safe is the fervent wish of

Your loving

Mother



A Narrow Escape

The Express office had a narrow escape from being numbered amongst the things of the past last Monday morning. Accidently the bed curtains in one of the rooms or the residence at the rear of the office were ignited by a match which Miss Leathem struck to enable her to find some clothing in a dark corner of the room, and in a few seconds there was a large blaze. Both Mrs Leathem and her daughter, who were in the room, endeavoured as best they could to extinguish the fire, which they eventually did, but not until the curtains and a kapok mattress were totally destroyed. Mrs Leathem

had her right hand severely burnt and so did Miss
Leathem.

Molong Express Saturday March 24th 1894



Bank Street
Molong
27 July 1894

Mrs Julia Ratliff
Bethwick Street
Wagga Wagga

My Dear Julia

You asked some time ago for a photograph to remember me by but I had
none to send.

I had occasion to be photographed by the local photographer last week. Our
council wish to commemorate local people of importance in Molong and
apparently I fall into that humble category. I had not noticed, until I saw this
photograph, that I have become middle aged. My glass is much kinder;
however they say the camera doesn't lie.

I send this hoping you may still see something of your childhood friend.

Your affectionate friend

Marion



"Let the journalist defend the doctrines of the party he approves; let him criticise and condemn the party of which he does not approve; reserving always his right to applaud his opponents or censure his friends as truth may require - and he will be independent enough for a free country."

Molong Express Header September 16 1893



Bank Street
Molong
20 January 1895

Mrs Alfred Phillips
Swan Street
North Fremantle
Western Australia

My Dearest Nellie

Alice arrived home today full of news and stories of your time together. She was very seasick on the return trip and had to rest in Sydney for several days before returning to Molong but she and William stayed with my sister Maria's family in Petersham so she was in good hands.

Alice has also told me that you are to have a baby and I wanted to congratulate you on this wonderful news. I understand that you are not feeling well. This is quite common and will hopefully pass very soon, and the best remedy is to keep busy and keep your mind off things but I wanted to pass on two of father's remedies which helped me tremendously.

Mix a tablespoon of cider vinegar in a full glass of water and sip that during the day. It will work while ever you drink it. And I am enclosing a lavender bag, in case you do not have one. Carry this with you and when you feel the

onset of nausea, immediately inhale the fumes from the lavender and breathe deeply through your nose. You must not be frightened as birth is a very normal process and I am happy to answer whatever I can by letter. I am sure Fremantle has excellent midwives and doctors and I trust that you will avail yourself of their advice early.

I am enclosing a copy of a book I have had for years, which may be of help to you. It is an old medical journal of my father's on childbirth. Of course I had the benefit of his presence in my first three confinements but by the time Frederick was born here in Molong, I think I knew more about the birthing procedure than the midwife, who seemed quite in awe of the amount of medical knowledge I had on the subject and was more inclined to stand back and let me do it all on my own, which is indeed what every woman finds she has to do anyway.

No matter how well prepared you are and how many births your doctor or midwife have attended, it is ultimately you who will be doing all the work and you who will know what is best as your confinement progresses. I urge you to use your own instincts when it comes to matters of rest and diet. It is very important that you do not put on too much weight and you will have to curtail your sweet tooth in this matter.

I also urge you to take long walks every day, morning and night. I know that it is uncomfortable but father always maintained that exercise was very important for the expectant mother and made all his patients take a daily constitutional of at least a mile or more. He believed that exercise made for a strong heart and helped develop the muscles and mental discipline needed to endure the confinement. My own mother had twelve children and was well and healthy throughout each pregnancy, with the exception of Matilda, but she was 48 when Matilda was born. No matter what is fashionable, father had a great success with his patients. A strong constitution and a positive mind is the best preparation for motherhood that I know. To keep active, no matter how ill one is feeling during these early months, will hold one in good stead for what is to come. I know it is fashionable for young women nowadays to lie about on day beds and that may be fine for those who have an unlimited supply of money and help in the house, but in the real world, there are still meals to prepare, chores to be done and family to be tended. The best time to learn this is now Nellie.

I encourage you to read this book. The diagrams are of a medical nature but they may go some way to explaining the process you are about to experience. I see no sense in keeping women ignorant to the processes of

their own bodies - that is surely a male interpretation of females being weak, believing that what they don't know won't hurt them. It is far better to be prepared.

I do urge you to ensure your husband respects you and your wishes during this time. A woman can only be subjected to unwanted behaviour if she allows it. If it would assist you to come home for a visit, I would be very happy to see you. I will send the fare if Mr Phillips is unable to manage this sum at present.

I wish you the happiness and companionship with your children which mine have brought to me and I am only sorry that my first grandchild will be born so far away that I will not see her immediately. I know I am presuming a female child but as soon as I read your letter I felt sure you are carrying a girl. Time will tell.

May God keep you safe and well, Nellie is the fervent wish of

Your most loving

Mother



Riddell Street
Molong
July 30 1895

Miss Alice Leathem
Hilltop School
Wellington

My dearest daughter, Alice

I wanted to let you know that I had a letter this morning from Alfred Phillips advising that Nellie was delivered of a daughter on the 19th July and all is well.

He is a man of few words and this is even more apparent in his letter, which I enclose. There is no information about the baby other than her gender and

that she is well, but there is a great deal of the country, the gold, the weather and the horses, so I gather that the time in Fremantle has not noticeably changed Mr Phillips' interests.

I look forward to seeing you this weekend.

Your loving

Mother



We are pleased to announce the birth of Louisa Alice Marion, daughter of Mr and Mrs Alfred Phillips of Fremantle. First grandchild of Mrs Marion Leathem of the Molong Express

Molong Express July 1895



The Molong Express
Bank Street
Molong
1 August 1895

Miss Louisa Alice Marion Phillips
Swan Street
North Fremantle

My dearest granddaughter,

It is with the greatest pleasure that I welcome you to the world and to the bosom of a family who already adore you although we have not even met.

I am saddened to be so far away from you that I have not even been able to hold you, my first grandchild, in my arms but I wanted you to know that you are much loved and we can hardly wait to meet you.

There is an old adage that a lady's name should appear in the newspaper only three times in her life, on the occasion of her birth, her marriage and her death. As a newspaperwoman, I have no time for such nonsense and believe a person's name should appear in the newspapers any time they achieve something noteworthy or are due recognition. I can think of no greater occasion than your birth so I enclose for you and your mother, a notice from the Molong Express heralding your birth and a journal in which to file it.

I hope that in the years ahead of you, this journal will be filled with all the wonderful milestones and achievements of your life, which I know will be great and good.

I wish you a life filled with happiness and love and satisfaction and I make this promise now, that as long as I am alive, you will have my confidence, my love and a place to call your home, if ever you should need it.

May God keep you safe all the days of your life is the fervent wish of

Your loving grandmother

Marion Leathem



Bank Street Molong
August 15 1895

Mrs John Williamson
Gurwood Street
Wagga Wagga

My dear Cecelia,

I wanted to let you know that I am a grandmother. I cannot tell you the mixed emotions of that statement. At once I am both excited and sad, for to have

my first grandchild born on the other side of this vast continent only confirms the distance my daughter has travelled to be away from me.

Her husband felt their fortune was to be made in the goldfields of the west and although I have seen too many casualties from the pursuit of gold, I knew that if I did not provide a blessing to the union, Nellie would go anyway and I would be left with the remnants of a ruined relationship with my daughter. The birth of her daughter, Louisa Alice Marion, apparently known as Fanny, seemed to have repaired some of the resentment in her opinion of me and I find her letters now full of kind words and reminiscence for times past.

Charles and Elsie Reese appear to have had a falling out about the dress she wore to church last Sunday. However Elsie walks past the Express office three or four times a day and Mr Reese says Charles walks past their house three or four times each evening. The boys in the Express office are wagering bets on which of them will give in first. They both seem unconcerned that their long and on-going courtship is a joke in this community.

William wants to move to Coonamble and farm and I think that might be a good decision for him as printing is not in his blood. Although he has worked as a compositor from time to time it is not a passion for him and his brothers will always overshadow him if he does not find his own vocation. However the Express needs him for the moment so he will continue with us.

John has a companion in Harriett Dunn who is a fine young woman, though she is a staunch Catholic and that causes great opposition from her family and her priest. I have had several conversations with her parents about the situation but although they are sensible people in every other aspect, their religion blinds them to what is a committed and loving relationship between our children. John is prepared to convert to Catholicism, which saddens me to some extent, but Harriet's parents will not accept a non-Catholic as a son in law under any circumstances.

John has far more business sense than Charles but Charles as eldest feels he should be in line to take over from me when I step down. Frederick will always stay close to Charles and loves his work on the paper. He is still quite the larrikin and I have cause to reprimand for his pranks, but in the privacy of my room I often laugh at his antics, for he reminds me so much of Henry and mirrors his behaviour more than any of the other children. Though he never really knew his father, the similarities are quite uncanny.

What I know and keep telling them all is that I have no intention of stepping down now or at any time in the future. Why after all would I leave the paper when it is finally in a position to support me when I have had to support it all of this time?

Alice seems destined to become an old maid. Although she is the sweetest of women, she seems to have no idea of how to behave in an alluring way with men. I know she pines for a husband and children and she has a glory box in her room with enough doilies and fancywork to stock the houses of ten new brides and a trousseau as delicate and as beautiful as any I have seen. The young men who have aspired to court her have been ignored and she says she would rather be an old maid than marry a man who fails to challenge her. I understand that logic but I would like to see Alice with a family of her own. She still travels out to Hilltop each week on the Cobb & Co coach, though the rail line will be a faster trip, if it ever finally completes.

I get regular letters from Henrietta and Alice but Matilda and Maria Leonard are not the greatest of correspondents though I gather they both communicate with you. I used to hear so often from Maria before her illness but now when she writes I see such unsteadiness in her handwriting. She is back in Sydney for treatment and her son William keeps me up to date with her progress. I will travel to Sydney for a convention in September so will visit her if she is still in Petersham.

As I get older, my own brood, though grown, take up all of my time outside of my work and I sometime have the feeling of parallel families. My children in one sector and my siblings in another. Since mother's death, I write to Nellie in Fremantle and sometimes Alice at Hilltop more frequently than I do to any of you, although you and Henrietta are my most consistent correspondents. I find myself writing in one tone to you and a different tone to my children. I suppose we all keep the mantle of wise parent for our children, even when we feel we have failed terribly in some way or another.

I am sorry your husband's health is not as well as it should be, but the advances in medicine are great and that gives hope. I often wonder what father would have thought of the new drugs and procedures available and recall how primitive were the conditions in his surgery at Tumut. I do miss him.

I must go as I have an editorial to write. In this town, people would rather read about Victor Trumper at the Oval than the Tsar's new decrees in Russia, and this afternoon, I will humour them.

Your loving sister

Marion



MOLONG

NOVEMBER 10 1896

MRS ALFRED PHILLIPS, SWAN STREET FREEMANTLE

NELLIE STOP RECEIVED CABLE REGARDING ALFREDS ACCIDENT
STOP TRAVELLING SOONEST VESSEL TO ASSIST STOP ESTIMATE
ARRIVAL NOV 20 STOP LOVE MOTHER



Aboard Peregrine
En route Fremantle Port
November 16 1896

Mrs Henrietta Elworthy
Hilltop Street
Grafton

My dearest Henrietta

Nellie's husband had an accident in the mine where he was working last week and was badly injured. He is in hospital and I am not sure if the prognosis is good as communication is limited at such a distance and it seemed best to travel over myself.

Nellie is expecting her second child and Fanny is only sixteen months old so Nellie is finding it difficult to manage on her own as well as care for her husband. Once I have assessed the situation, I will decide the best action.

I am excited about meeting my granddaughter for the first time and I have always loved to travel to new places, but this trip would be easier without the anticipation of the unknown circumstances that I will find upon my arrival. However I have determined to enjoy this brief holiday.

The Peregrine is a trim little steamer and very comfortable. We stopped for several hours in Melbourne and Henry Wrixon and his wife came on board to visit and were impressed with my accommodation. He was recently made a Member of the Legislative Council and I am not sure how far his political aspirations will take him. I would not be surprised if he does not desire to be Prime Minister of this country some day, when we attain our independence from England. He is quite unaffected by his success and appears to take dining with royalty and the like in his stride.

Arthur sent me a photo of you and Edith and she has become a beautiful young woman, much as you were when you were her age. The bond between a mother and daughter represents a natural progression of the generations. Sons marry and even if the relationship with one's daughter in law is cordial, it is probable a son will move away from your confidence. Married daughters, suddenly understanding the burdens of womanhood, become less critical and move closer to their mothers. I am looking to reacquaint myself with Nellie again in her new role of mother and wife. Her letters indicate she has grown up quite a lot since I farwelled her as a bride at the railway station.

I will write again when I know more.

Your loving sister

Marion



Swan Street
North Fremantle
November 24 1896

Mr Charles Leathem
The Molong Express
Molong

My dear Charles,

What complications awaited me when I arrived in Fremantle, I can hardly begin to explain. Nellie is reasonably well but in a terrible state about their situation. It is evident that money has been scarce for some time and she had little food in the house. She is also carrying a second baby and looks frightfully thin and undernourished.

Mr Phillips was involved in a cave in at the mine where he works and was trapped underground overnight. He ingested a quantity of contaminated dust, which has badly affected his lungs, making breathing difficult. He is to remain in hospital until he can breathe with less difficulty but the doctors are not sure how much damage has occurred. We have a meeting with the doctor on Friday and I hope to know more then, when he sees that I understand something about medicine.

Louisa, who only answers to Fanny, is a sweet and engaging child with her mother's big eyes and her father's smile. She has become quite attached to me since I arrived, seeking affection I think in the midst of all the confusion and has become like a little shadow, following me everywhere on her tiny feet. She has taken to curling up on my lap whenever I sit down, sitting very still, without fidgeting and staying there quietly for however long I care to sit with her.

I see no option but to bring them back to Molong as soon as Mr Phillips is able to travel. I doubt if I can stay here for the time that will take but I can assist Nellie in packing up the house and shipping back the few items she wants to keep. I am attaching a list for Alice of items to acquire and do and we will set up Nellie and her family in Alice's old room.

I will probably travel home alone with Louisa and the luggage and leave Nellie to follow with Mr Phillips when he is able to travel but I will need to stay here for another ten days at least.

I am attaching also some copy for inclusion in the next edition on mining in this area and also on the modern steam ships now transporting passengers along the coastal regions. They do not need editing and can be included as

they are. I previously sent from Adelaide some copy on Henry Wrixon and his views on the economy, which I trust have already gone to print.

I will cable you when I know my travel details.

Your loving

Mother



Bank Street
Molong
25 December 1896

Mrs A Phillips
Swan Street
North Fremantle

Mr dearest Nellie

This letter will serve to bring you Christmas greetings and reassure you as to the welfare of your daughter. Fanny had a most wonderful morning this morning with all her uncles providing her with a stocking full of presents and then giving her piggyback rides around the front lawn before we went to church.

Alice has taken it on herself to sew an entire season of clothes for her and Louisa stands patiently on the dining table while Alice pins up hems or takes in tucks. She really is a most patient child and you will find her well and healthy on your return.

You will not be surprised to hear that William is to marry Alice's friend Emily Williams in April next year. The wedding will take place at Holy Trinity in Orange and will be a rather grand affair. Emily's mother always liked a party and they have tremendous connections all over the district. Being married in

a church appears to be the new fashion, so we can expect grand things, I suppose.

I am pleased Mr Phillips is recovering and we look forward to your return here in March. I have arranged for steamer tickets to be sent directly to you and you can catch the train from Central Station. I have arranged accommodation in Sydney as you will need to rest after the voyage before embarking on the rail trip in your current condition.

We all look forward to seeing you in Molong and send our loves and prayers for a safe journey.

With all my love for a happy Christmas and I pray the new year brings us better news

Mother



MOLONG
20 JANUARY 1897

MRS ALFRED PHILLIPS
HOTEL AUSTRALIA
SYDNEY

RECEIVED LETTER ADVISING YOU ARE TRAVELLING ALONE STOP
JOHN WILL MEET YOU IN SYDNEY AT YOUR HOTEL STOP DELAY
ONWARD TRAVEL UNTIL HE ARRIVES STOP WORRIED STOP WHAT
HAS HAPPENED ? STOP LOVE MOTHER STOP



Social Mems

We are pleased to report on the marriage of Mr William Leathem, compositor at this newspaper to Miss Emily Williams, daughter of Mr Thomas Williams of Molong. The wedding took place on the 12th April at Holy Trinity

Church in Orange and Mr and Mrs Leathem travelling to Sydney on their wedding tour. The groom's sister Mrs A Phillips travelled from Fremantle for the wedding and will stay with her mother Mrs Leathem.

The Molong Express - November 18 1897

Born to Mrs Alfred Phillips (nee Leathem) a daughter, Dorothy Isabel on the 12th May 1897 in Molong.

The Molong Express - May 20 1897



Molong
15 May 1897

Mr Alfred Phillips
Swan Street
Freemantle

Dear Mr Phillips

I feel you should be acquainted with the fact that you have another daughter. Nellie has named her Dorothy Isabel and she is a healthy child.

Nellie has given me a full account of your treatment of her over these past three years and I have advised her not to return to Freemantle. In my experience, men who resort to beating their wives rate as low as common vermin and do not change their habits. I will not let you subject my daughter to this treatment any longer nor will I have my grandchildren witness this type of behaviour from their father against their mother.

As much as I was against my daughter's marriage to you, her condition and her pleading allowed me to let the wedding proceed against my better judgement. Now that you have proven yourself to be the type of person I

believed you to be, I must insist that you do not attempt to approach my daughter again nor have any contact with the children.

Please do not disregard my warning on this. I would have no hesitation in having you arrested and charged for your behaviour and do not underestimate the connections I have locally and federally to pursue you should you ever lay a hand on any member of my family again.

If you set foot in this district again or make any attempt to contact Nellie or the children, I will use every avenue available to bring you to justice. Nellie has made a statement to the local magistrate listing your misdemeanours and it will be enforced if you choose to ignore my words.

As they grow older, Nellie will tell the children that their father died, which is preferable to telling them that their father was no more than a drunkard and coward who resorted to beating their mother as remedy for his own failings. In this fashion, the children will at least have some sympathy for you, which they will not have if they are forced to face the truth about the type of person you really are.

None of us ever want to see you again and for your own good, I suggest you remain in Western Australia.

Marion Leathem



Ourselves

We crave the indulgence of our readers for the shortcomings of the present issue. Owing to having contracted a severe cold, we have been confined to our room since Sunday last - and are there still (Friday) - hence we have been under considerable disadvantage in performing our official duties.

Molong Express 31 July 1897



The Molong Express
Bank Street
Molong
December 18 1897

Season's Greetings

Mrs Marion Leathem and her family, Alice, Charles, John, William, Helen, Frederick, Louisa and Dorothy take this opportunity to wish you all a happy and prosperous Christmas and New Year and invite you to join us for an informal afternoon gathering at the Express office in Bank Street on Sunday December 26th at 3pm.

We look forward to your company.

RSVP Friday 24th December



Bank Street
Molong
30 December 1897

Mrs Julia Ratliff
"Valley Heights"
Wagga Wagga

My Dear Julia

I have owed you a letter now for four weeks so please forgive my tardiness. Mother had a rule that any correspondence must be answered within the week, so I feel her disapproval each time I walk past my desk and see your letter.

I had forgotten how time consuming young children can be. Since we have had Nellie and her two staying with us, the house seems to have rearranged itself with some timetable known only to Fanny.

She has captured our hearts and I am sure I was never as lenient with my children, but then, I never knew what it was to have the proximity of a grandmother so I am re-inventing the role for my own grandchildren and I must admit, relishing every moment.

Dorrie the baby is now seven months old and sleeps and eats to order despite Nellie's erratic schedules, to an extent where I believe children might in fact bring themselves up to some degree, as the order in Dorrie's life is self-imposed rather than through any design of her parent. When I think how orderly I made the children's lives, I am taken aback to find how well Nellie's children do without any of that organisation.

To answer your question, we have not heard from Nellie's husband for some months and letters to his old address are returned unopened, so we are perplexed as to his whereabouts. Nellie of course is doing her best to find information, but I cannot let her return to the other side of the country when she has young children in her care and we cannot spare any of the boys at this time to travel so far. It is a draw back with this country that we have such vast spaces and we can only assume he has travelled to a new location and wait for him to write.

I saw the report of your daughter's wedding in the Wagga Wagga Advertiser last month so congratulate you on the match she has made. I am not acquainted with her husband but I do recall her father in law from our time in Tumut and I am sure it will be a comfort for you to know that she has married well. She was always a sensible girl and I am sure has given you little trouble. In these modern times, that is worth a great deal. Please give her the love of an errant godmother and tell her I will write after the New Year.

I wish you well for 1898 and hope that she will bring you only happiness and good news.

With loving regards

Marion

FEDERAL CONVENTION ELECTION.
AN AID TO VOTING.

With the Compliments of Mr. PEACOCK'S Creswick Committee.

CANDIDATES' NAMES:

BERRY, GRAHAM
CONNOR, JOSEPH HENRY
COOK, JAMES NEWTON HAXTON HUME
DEAKIN, ALFRED
EMBLING, WILLIAM HENRY
FITZGERALD, NICHOLAS
FRAZER, SIMON
GAUNSON, DAVID
GILLIES, DUNCAN
HIGGINS, HENRY BOURNES
ISAACS, ISAAC ALFRED
LORMER, WILLIAM JOHN
MELVILLE, DONALD
M'INTYRE, JOHN
O'LOGHLEN, BRYAN
PEACOCK, ALEXANDER JAMES
PURVES, JAMES LIDDELL
QUICK, JOHN
REID, ROBERT
SACHSE, ARTHUR OTTO
SARGOOD, FREDERICK THOMAS
SMITH, LOUIS LAWRENCE
SMITH, ROBERT MURRAY
STYLES, JAMES
TRENWITH, WILLIAM ARTHUR
TURNER, GEORGE
VALE, RICHARD TAYLER
WEST, JOHN
WRIXON, HENRY JOHN
ZEAL, WILLIAM AUSTIN

NOTE WELL!

1. Study the above list carefully, and **STRIKE OUT** from time to time the names of those for whom you **DO NOT INTEND TO VOTE**.
2. Your Vote will be informal unless **TEN Names** and **TEN ONLY** are left uncanceled on the Ballot-Paper.
3. Count the names not marked out and make sure that **ONLY TEN** are left (neither more nor less), and that a plain bold line has been passed through the remainder.
4. Carry this card to the Polling Booth on March 4th, and **MARK YOUR BALLOT PAPER FROM THE CARD**.

CRESWICK ADVERTISER PRINT.

National Library of Australia

nla.ms-ms1540-11-194-v

**Federal Convention Election 1897 list of nominees to
represent the states at the Federal Convention
From the archives of the National Library of Australia**

1840/11/35

9th March, 97
Rahem. Kew.

My dear Deakin

Many thanks for yr kind note. From the time the issue took the strict party line it did, I had no hope of the result as far as I was concerned, & only wonder that I polled so well. This was doubtless owing to many of the Liberals voting for me as you did. I did not note; - if I had, w^d of course have noted for several of the Liberals, as well as for yourself.

I need not say that I will do what I can to assist the movement from outside.

It's also a very pleasant note from Higgins.

Yours Truly
H J Wrixon

Letter from Sir Henry Wrixon to Alfred Deakin thanking him for his note of support - from the archives of the National Library of Australia



Wanted - Printer for the Molong Express.

Apply with reference to Editor, Mrs Marion Leathem

Sydney Morning Herald April 13, 1898



The Molong Express
Bank Street
Molong
13 April 1898

Mrs H Elworthy
Jessop Street
Grafton

My dear Henrietta,

I have been advertising today for printers – I do not understand why there is such a shortage of men available to do honest work for decent pay.

Mr Higgins from the bank was in the office the other day when I was lamenting the fact that printers do not want to come and work in the country and he suggested that perhaps printers do not want to work for a female editor and that I should just mention that applications should be made to the editor and not mention my name.

After struggling today with unqualified printers, I was almost persuaded to take this advice but after consideration I decided that once they correspond with me they will know their employer will be female anyway. I would in fact be biased towards any applicant who had not done his research and found out that the paper was run by me, although Charles and John would like to dispute that.

Now that women are more commonly involved in enterprise outside the home, it seems ridiculous that in 1898 a woman still struggles against the prejudice of men in relation to work. I sometimes wonder anew what terrible deeds men think we will inflict once we have donned the manager's hat.

Charles wanted to handle the interviews and correspondence but since in the end it is my decision whom we shall employ, I would rather not waste anyone's time. The standards and skills are getting better all the time but I find that the men get lazy if they feel they have someone soft at the helm so I constantly have to be the harridan to keep them in line. I heard the apprentice telling John the other day that he hoped the 'old woman' would not come in until he had finished the trays as I make him nervous. He had not realised I was in the doorway and his face when he saw me was a picture. I of course rebuked him which will only reinforce his opinion, but I quite like them all thinking I am some tough old battle axe, as it keeps them in line. A reputation like that cannot be bought.

Henry Wrixon kindly sent me a first-hand account of the meeting for Federation in Melbourne last week, which I was able to print verbatim and I sent it to Arthur so he could use it in the Gundagai Times as well. So often I find myself struggling for interesting front page news but with Cyclone Mahina killing 20 people in Cooktown and Kitchener marshalling ten thousand soldiers for the South African conflict, I'm afraid the Presbyterian cake stall and Dr Ross's vitriolic letters were moved to the second page.

I am pleased that you will be visiting us next month.

I look forward to seeing you again

Your loving sister

Marion



Bank Street
Molong
16 July 1899

Mrs Charles Smith
Royal Prince Alfred Hospital

Camperdown
Sydney

My dearest sister Maria

I was distressed to hear from Maria Leonard that you are back in hospital in Sydney and I hope with treatment that you are feeling much stronger.

I will be travelling down by train next Tuesday to visit you and Maria Leonard and the other sisters will be travelling by train from Wagga Wagga so we can have quite a gathering of the clan.

Alice has made you a matinee jacket, which I have enclosed, as she knows you feel the cold and that hospital is a draughty place in winter.

New medicine is wonderful now and I am sure the best doctors are to be found at Royal Prince Alfred. Father never believed in giving up because a doctor decreed it and neither do I, believing it is God yet who determines our fate. You have always been the strongest and most resilient of women Maria, do not disappoint us now by being otherwise.

I look forward to seeing you next week, but until then know that prayers for your recovery and comfort are being sent by

Your loving sister

Marion



The rain which has been recently prayed for in some of the churches, rather unkindly prevented some folk from attending our Anglican Church on Sunday evening last.

The Molong Express Date



Stanmore, Sydney
13 August 1899

Mr Charles Leathem
The Molong Express
Molong

Dear Charles,

Maria died this morning after a terrible few days, but we were all with her up until an hour before, when we left her husband and children alone with her, as is rightfully their place.

We are all exhausted but relieved for Maria, as no one has the right to suffer as much as she did. It was terribly distressing to see her in so much pain and struggling to stay alive. Our tears when she was finally pronounced dead were more of release than grief.

I will travel to Wollongong tomorrow for her funeral and return by train on Friday.

With love

Mother



Bank Street
Molong
15 August 1899

Mr Charles Smith
Bustle Hill
Wollongong

My dear brother in law, Charles

I do not know how to write you a letter of sympathy or encouragement when I feel my own loss is almost as great as yours.

Maria was one of the finest women on earth as well as a dear sister, and although she has not been well for a number of years, it was always comforting to know that she was sitting in Wollongong reading letters and smiling over the stories of the extended family. She was most like mother in that she had such a keen interest in all about her and even though our family had grown to many, she was the one who always knew the middle names of any niece or nephew or the year of birth of any grandchild. I always relied on Maria to keep the family chronologies.

Maria also wrote the most beautiful and endearing letters and I have them all bundled up in front of me, tied with blue ribbon because that was her favourite colour when she was a child. I keep my sisters' correspondence like that, red ribbon for Henrietta, green for Cecelia, yellow for Maria Leonard, pink for Matilda and white for Alice. I had not realised how I treasured her letters until she died and I knew I would never receive another from her. As I re-read them I realised that what they told, page by page, stamped envelope by stamped envelope, was the story of our generation and in particular our family.

I had meant to keep them as a memento of my big sister but at the funeral, Minnie seemed so interested to hear of her mother's early days that I thought she might perhaps like to have them as a way of keeping her mother alive a little longer. The letters span over thirty years, since Maria left Tumut and contain a history I would like to preserve.

Maria's words reflect her role as observer in the lives of her family. She recounted the happy and the sad, the minor events and the major victories with a clear and unbiased hand. She generally sought the optimistic in any situation, but even in her sorrow, there was the sense of the storyteller, like Scheherazade herself I suppose, the stories were her way of making sense of the world.

You might like to read these as well, for they convey always her love and respect for you and her devotion to the children. I offer these letters to Minnie on the condition that they be kept as a tribute to Maria and handed down to Maria's grandchildren. Her stories of Ireland and our arrival in

Australia may one day be used to collate the history of the early days of this colony and I would like Maria to have her rightful place in that history.

I once asked her how she always managed to give so much of herself and she told me it was because you gave her so much encouragement and love so she had ample to spare. For making my sister so happy, you will always have my love and respect and I hope that you might turn to us now and then if we can repay that kindness and friendship in any way.

The world seems an emptier place right now.

Your loving sister in law

Marion Leathem



Transvaal War

Lieutenant Winston Churchill, the special correspondent of the "Morning Post" who was second time taken prisoner by the Boers, has again escaped, and has arrived safely at Delagoa Bay

Molong Express December 30 1899



The Molong Express
1st January 1900

We wish our readers the compliments of the holiday and look forward to the new century. The twentieth century promises us a new era of government and independence when the Federation finally comes to fruition.

The Molong Express and Western Districts Advertiser is celebrating twenty four years serving the people of Molong and districts and we intend to serve you for at least as many more.

Marion Leathem

Proprietress



While engaging in a sham fight today in connection with the military encampment, Private John Leathem, of the Molong half squadron and Private Bennett of the Bathurst Half Squadron were wounded. The latter was wounded in the face and eyes and the former on the left side of his face. They had, it is stated, captured one of the enemy, when his rifle discharged at such close distance that it caused the injuries named.

Sydney Morning Herald 30 May 1900



Riddell Street
Molong
4 May 1900

Mrs Julia Ratliff
"Valley Heights"
Wagga Wagga

My dear Julia

Thank you for your letter inquiring after John. Yes, the accident was severe and the exploding rifle caused quite severe lacerations to his face and to two other soldiers who were standing near him but he has not lost his sight, for which I am grateful, as it would be impossible to do his job with limited vision. He insists on being in the reserve, hoping I think to join the NSW Mounted Rifles if there are further calls for troops for this second terrible war in South

Africa. I suppose boys like to play soldiers even when they are grown, but I am hoping this mishap will cure this particular pass time.

As news of the atrocities to women and children in the British concentration camps becomes more frequent, I have become opposed to using our troops to round up the families of Boer soldiers like cattle and make them live in such terrible conditions. Of course, to comment in this way in *The Express* would label me a traitor, which is ridiculous for a more ardent supporter of this nation would be hard to find, but it is difficult not to comment when Kitchener believes the only way to success is to destroy crops and good working farms as a way to stop the Boers. It is a short term strategy devised by a man who has never worked on the land nor provided food for the masses and mark my words, when this war is over, you will see our troops helping to replant fields and rebuild farms so there is enough food to support the victors.

Nellie has gone to Kangarooobie, a very large holding near Orange this week with some friends, leaving Fanny and Dorrie in our care. Although Nellie is the mother of two, she seems to lead a busier social life than any of us. Alice moved back to the school at Bridgewater to be closer to the children and each afternoon they are waiting at the gate for her return. Fanny is the more serious of the two and already sews beautifully and loves to have everything neat and tidy. Alice teaches her writing and reading and I have never seen a child who can occupy herself so happily for such long periods of time.

Nellie has not heard from her husband and we are thinking he may have died, perhaps in the outback prospecting, for he has had no contact with her. It is a difficult situation for Nellie is a young woman and hankers after companionship but as she is technically still married, she is in a limbo of sorts until her husband either makes contact or is found deceased. The children do not really know their father so do not fret, but it is an awkward situation.

William and Emily had a baby boy two months ago whom they have called Bertie William Vale, my first grandson. He is a sweet little chap and is much adored.

I must close and write up this week's editorial. As the Federation draws closer, I find there are more politicians looking to make their mark in the press and show how much they do for their wages and I am enjoying the levels of mediocrity to which they aspire. I could fill an entire two columns each week with the gaffs alone.

Your loving friend

Marion Leathem



Bank Street
Molong
2nd June 1900

Mrs Helen Phillips
Kangaroobie
Via Orange

Dear Nellie

I returned from Bathurst today because I was feeling unwell and was surprised to find you absent when you had promised to keep house for the boys and your children in my absence. I know you were expecting me to stay until Friday, which is why you have taken the opportunity to travel to Kangaroobie for these few days, leaving the children with Alice and the maid. I do not like this deception, nor do I admire people who do not keep their word.

I understand that you feel restricted in your position as sole mother to your children, and the regression of once again living with your mother, but I see no alternative for one who has no money and no training to provide for one's self. I have offered to teach you something of the newspaper but you flatly refuse to show any interest, preferring instead to take on the role of the social butterfly you had, before you were married.

Times and events have changed your social standing Nellie. And they are times and events which you have brought upon yourself to some degree. I must insist that you start to spend more time looking after the welfare of your children, participating in the upkeep of the house which we all share and putting your own pleasures in second place.

Fanny in particular gravitates towards Alice because she spends more time with her than you. This does not give you licence to neglect the children as you do and I am annoyed that I need to point this out. You cannot expect

someone else will provide for them. I do not need to remind you that when your father died I had to survive on my own and I had six children, not two and I had no family to help me.

This is the time Nellie to take stock of who you want to be and more importantly what you want for your children. There is no merit in standing back and letting fate determine your life. I would like you to return to Molong immediately and we will discuss this situation face to face. I will not be taken for granted nor will I allow you to take advantage of Alice's good nature. I also should not need to remind you that you are still a married woman and should behave accordingly or suffer the condemnation of this town. Tread warily Nellie.

I am not saying it is easy, but it is time you realised that you are an adult of twenty four years and a mother and you must take responsibility for your actions. I will see you tomorrow evening and I expect you to have thought through what I have written here.

I have no idea what it is you find so fascinating at Kangarooobie that you take every opportunity to go there, but your time could be better used planning how you will provide for yourself and your daughters.

Mother



Bank Street
Molong
3 August 1900

Dean John Marriott
Anglican Diocese
Bathurst

Dear Dean Marriott,

Canon Aldiss at Molong has suggested I write to you on a matter of some delicacy and I understand he has acquainted you with my situation and that of my daughter, Helen Phillips.

Helen moved back to Molong from Freemantle before the birth of her second child, expecting her husband to follow at a later date, but she has had no contact from him since she left Western Australia. We presume her husband may have died and as Helen is a young woman of twenty four, with two small children, she obviously would like to remarry at some time, if her husband is in fact deceased.

Would you please give your consideration on what she should do to seek some binding finalisation of her marriage so that she may move forward from the limbo in which she finds herself? Her husband has no family in Australia to contact for information and we do not have details for any family in England either.

It is a delicate situation and I would be grateful for your experienced opinion on how she should proceed.

I await your response and am happy to travel to Bathurst if you would like to discuss this in more detail.

Yours most sincerely

Mrs Marion Leathem



Canon Read of Carcoar fired a big charge at modern Pharisees on Sunday morning last, at our Anglican church – and didn't forget them who whether right or wrong, send all their relatives and friends to Heaven (and sometimes nearly send the printer somewhere else) by writing extravagant poetical epitaphs for publication

The Molong Express (Date)



Bank Street
Molong
4th August 1900

Mr Thomas Doherty
C/- "Kangarooobie"
Via Orange

Dear Mr Doherty

Though I despise intrigue, I write this letter without Nellie's knowledge. My daughter seems inclined to spend her life with you, with or without my blessing. She also seems inclined to prevent us from meeting but I think it is time you made yourself available for an appointment with me.

Would it be possible for you to come out for tea this Saturday? I have not spoken to Helen of this yet but will advise her once I have your reply.

I am not sure why she is so reluctant for this meeting, but if your relationship is to continue, we need to meet so let us do this sooner rather than later, for there are a great many things to be discussed and obstacles to be overcome.

I have arranged for Nellie's daughters to attend a friend's house that afternoon so we can all speak freely.

Please do not disappoint me. Tea will be at three promptly.

Yours sincerely

(Mrs.) Marion Leathem



MOLONG
6 AUGUST 1900

MRS HELEN PHILLIPS C/- KANGAROOBIE

INSIST YOU RETURN HOME TODAY STOP WHAT YOU INTEND IS
HIGHLY IMPROPER STOP CONSIDER YOUR DAUGHTERS, STOP
MOTHER STOP



Molong
20 August 1900

Mrs Helen Phillips
"Kangarooobie"
Via Orange

Dear Nellie

I regret the scene that accompanied you taking leave of us this morning but I am shocked and disappointed at your attitude and your actions.

I should not have to remind you of what you left behind in Freemantle but it almost seems you believe your own fiction and have let the past few years become the property of another because you wish to pursue some new folly.

Marriage and motherhood are both lifetime bonds, which cannot be severed just because one has found something better. You will recall we had a similar conversation before you married Mr Phillips and if you had not put yourself into a position of no choice then, neither of us would be having this conversation now. Do you not learn from your heedless actions?

You are not free to marry Mr Doherty, you surely must understand that. I have done what I can to assist you to move away from your marriage to Mr Phillips with as little scandal and gossip as possible but I will not be a party to anything illegal or immoral and I will not let you subject your children to the

depravities of your own desires, even if it means a scene and the public humiliation of disclosure.

Do you not understand the shame and dishonour that will haunt you all your life if you continue as you intend to do? Do you think you are above the law of the church and the land? Do you think that no other young woman has wanted an easy solution to her loneliness or been flattered by the attention of a good looking man?

If you wish to pursue this course, you must follow the process of the courts, which means finding if Mr Phillips is alive and if he is, obtaining a divorce, no matter how lengthy and humiliating that process. If Mr Doherty loves you as you say, he will understand that and wait for you and will support you through the years this might take. If he is not prepared to wait, I think that will give you a gauge to his character and intentions.

You must remember a woman is heavily judged by her morals, even if a man is not. If your affair with Mr Doherty becomes common knowledge, you will find a strong shift in the sentiment of the town, who now support you because of your perceived widowhood. Do not think that sentiment cannot change overnight if you are seen to be the guilty party.

I will not let Fanny and Dorothy be part of any scandal for they are innocent children and look to us to protect them, even if their mother is prepared to pursue her own pleasures over the welfare of her daughters. I will keep them here until you come to your senses. Dorrie is too small to understand what is happening but Fanny is a perceptive child who has already lost her father. She does not need the added stigma of a mother's scandal.

I beseech you to see sense and to abandon this plan. It is not too late stop this course of action. Return to Molong so we can address this sensibly and we can forget the harsh words that were said today.

Sometimes we cannot see what is best for us and need the reasoned eye of another. Please come home to your children.

I am so pleased your father is not alive to see what his daughter has become. It would have broken his heart as it is breaking mine.

It is not too late to set this right. Please Nellie, I beg of you, and I have never begged anyone before, think before you step further into this terrain?

Mother



Molong
20 September 1900

Mrs Helen Philips
Condobolin Rd
Nymagee

Dear Nellie

I received your letter this morning and was so angered at your audacity that I decided to wait until after lunch to respond.

It seems that you now wish to show concern for Fanny by requesting she travel out to some dreadful mining dump to live in squalor as you set up house and family.

Perhaps you should have considered Fanny before you got into that wagon with Mr Doherty and drove west, for it would seem to me you never had much consideration for her when you were contemplating your own future and planning behind my back.

I have no intention of further damaging Fanny's life by subjecting her to a doubtful future and poverty in some outback settlement. I had no say in Dorrie travelling with you when you left, choosing your time when I was away from the town, but I will not allow Fanny to suffer your fate. She will remain here until you see sense and come back to Molong.

I suspect you are pregnant, though you have continued to deny it, and if that be the case, I wash my hands of the whole affair. You will not drag all of us into your squalid situation, but do not attempt to contact your daughter until you have resolved your life in some orderly way that allows you to properly mother a young and impressionable child.

And I will not address your mail to Mrs Doherty, as you request – no matter how shameful it may be for you to be addressed by your own name, when you are living with a man who is not your husband. If you continue to live as you are, you may as well get used to the shame for it will be constant companion for however long you intend to pursue this course.

Mother



Molong
10 October 1900

Mrs John Williamson
Gurwood Street
Wagga Wagga

Dearest Cecelia

I saw your note to Alice asking her and Nellie to Wagga Wagga for Ethel's wedding celebrations, so thought I would answer on their behalf with reasons for our nonattendance.

You will be surprised to hear that Nellie has taken the position of housekeeper at a property at Nymagee, near Cobar, which is becoming a prosperous mining and farming community. She had the offer to move there through an acquaintance and seemed keen to pursue it, even if I had my doubts about the situation. It is quite a distance from Molong, so it would be nearly impossible for her to travel to Wagga Wagga.

She has taken Dorrie with her, but we all felt it more sensible to leave Fanny here as there are no schools or other children in the district and Nellie felt she would be better able to handle her new duties with only Dorrie in her care. This means Alice and I share care of Fanny which is no chore as she is a delightful child. She does not appear to be missing her mother as much as we feared so we will muddle along like this for the foreseeable future but I am unsure as to when Nellie will come back to Molong.

It has been a turbulent time these past few months and I will not be unhappy to see the end of this year. The promise of Federation and cutting our ties to England fills me with hope for a more enlightened period but I wonder if change is always for the best.

Queen Victoria fails daily according to the telegraphic intelligence and the promise of Edward as Monarch is not something I anticipate with optimism.

The sense and values of the parents are not always inherited by the child. Morals and accountability are becoming increasingly rare and I do not look forward to being ruled by a monarch who has not one iota of his mother's ability or discretion. If the gossip about him is to be believed, England under Edward would be a very different place so we may be well placed to separate our destiny from the motherland and set our own course as a nation.

It is a shame Henry Parkes did not live to see the legacy of all his hard work. Though he and I did not always agree, in retrospect, he was a much better politician than most in Sydney and at least he had a passion for his calling, unlike some of the more recent additions to Macquarie Street who are all wind and pomp and I am afraid women are as bad as men in this endeavour.

I am enclosing a wedding gift for Ethel and her husband, which I hope you will pass on with our love and please convey our regrets and reasons for not attending. You will enjoy your role as mother of the bride and I am pleased you have such high praise for your intended son in law. Every mother deserves the peace of mind of her daughter making a successful marriage and I am happy that you will have that.

Please let Ethel know we will raise a glass to her happiness and one for you also Cecelia. I think of you often and you are always in the prayers of your

Loving sister

Marion



From the personal column of the Sydney Morning Herald:

A Toomey - When shall I hear from you.
Heart sick and weary, fondest love.

True Katey

The only sudden cure we know for this agony is drowning.

Molong Express 16 October 1888



The Molong Express
Bank Street
Molong
1st January 1901

Sir Henry Wrixon
"Raheen"
Kew

My Dear Henry

What a momentous day for us all. Finally we have Federation and our own identity and you must be so proud of the part you have played to bring it about.

We have of course, along with every other newspaper in Australia, been rejoicing in the news of the federation for what a significant milestone it is in our country's progress, perhaps the most significant event since the landing of the first fleet nearly one hundred and thirteen years ago. I am happy this has happened in my lifetime for there have been times over the past few years when I thought it might never eventuate.

The chance of such a banner headline has not been possible for a very long time, so we have taken every opportunity here today to decorate our paper and indeed our town and I enclose this week's edition for your interest. The blue border was my idea and although my sons at first objected, due to the trouble and cost, we have been inundated with compliments on our 'style'.

Ever since the People's Convention was held in Bathurst a few years ago, there has been much interest amongst the local population at the prospect of a united country for as we are a farming community there is much to be gained by standardising the free trade between states and abolishing the protectionism which now exists. Now that we have rail links to Sydney and the western areas, transporting fresh produce to other states has become possible and there is even talk of rail cars to carry living stock to Sydney rather than relying on the drovers. Imagine that in a relatively short time you might be serving fat lamb, grown in Molong, on your dinner table in Kew!

I wonder what wonderful prospects this century holds and what great advances will be made. As the world grows smaller with modern travel and telegraphic intelligence, we can only grow more closely aligned as nations. I wonder what possibilities will be available for our grandchildren and theirs.

I feel today as I felt when I first left home and married, as if I have finally come of age.

With great respect and congratulations

Marion Leathem



By Gazette notices, dated Jan. 24 1901, the Lieutenant-Governor intimated that the King would be proclaimed that day, at His Majesty's Palace at St. James London. The colours were hoisted at the mast head and will be so displayed until her late Majesty Queen Victoria is interred.

Molong Express 2 February 1901



Bathurst
28 June 1901

Mr Charles Leathem
The Molong Express
Molong

My dear Charles

I met with Mr Dalton in Bathurst today at the office of the Bathurst Advocate – he is apparently extending his advertising to this area as well, so we must be mindful of the rates we offer as the Advocate has cheaper advertising than the Express.

He congratulated me on the birth of my new grandchild, for apparently Nellie gave birth to a baby boy whom they have named Reginald at Nymagee recently. Mr Dalton is in touch with Nellie's father in law who still works at Kangarooobie. I was quite shocked but managed to hide my surprise so I doubt he knew he had taken me unawares.

We all need to be prepared for congratulations and the inevitable questions about the baby and Nellie if we are to maintain our position, so I see no option but to advise, but only if asked, that Nellie married Mr Doherty quietly due to his different religion, and that the baby and Nellie are well.

Would you please discreetly advise the others so they may be prepared, as the Dohertys have great connections in the area and it will look out of order if we are the only ones who do not know the situation?

I cannot tell you how unsettled I feel about all of this. It is a terrible thing to know less about your own child than strangers who do not really know her at all.

I hope to have regained my composure by Friday when I return but wanted to warn you.

I am attaching my notes from the conference which you may find interesting, especially in reaction to new formats in display advertisements.

With love

Mother



Bank Street
Molong
30 May 1902

Mrs Henrietta Elworthy
Main Street
Grafton

My Dear Henrietta

I'm sure you are devoting a lot of attention to your new granddaughter, Merlyn and I am sure that Edith is enjoying your proximity to assist her

It seems you have made Grafton your permanent home now and I think it would be almost impossible for me to visit you there, so I can only hope you might travel through this way again some time soon, perhaps if there is a good enough reason, you could bring Edith and the baby as well and I think I have found a reason worthy of the trip.

Alice surprised me last week by asking if she could invite a certain Mr Johnston for tea. Considering Alice has reached the age of thirty-five without any presence of a serious suitor, I assumed Mr Johnston would be an acquaintance from some committee or another for Alice is involved in a great many groups. Mr Johnston arrived promptly at four pm, dressed in fine tweed and serge, looking every inch the country squire as father would say. He was very charming and made astute conversation about the economics of the town and it seems he has purchased a very large holding called Dilga, from Dr Ross out at Cumnock.

Shortly after tea he asked to see me privately and I assumed some business proposal was afoot when he asked, quite respectfully for my daughter's hand in marriage. I was so shocked I said yes before I had even questioned his worth and considered my thoughts on the matter. When we returned to the table, Mr Johnston rose and proposed a toast to their upcoming nuptials, looking squarely at Alice who sat as one transfixed, with high colour in her cheeks and a wonderful smile on her face.

It appears they met when Mr Johnston was the driver of the Cobb and Co. coach, which took Alice backwards and forwards to Wellington each week for the ten years she taught there. He has obviously done well for himself as

Dilga is one of the most prized properties in this area and is almost a district in itself. Mr Johnston said that as both he and Alice are past their first youth, they did not want to waste any more time and so the marriage will be in July. I know this is short notice but Alice said that Mr Johnston is in the process of furnishing Dilga and if she does not soon have a say in the type of furniture he is buying, the house will be a laughing stock. Apparently he has purchased an enormous grandfather clock but no chairs or tables, so sits on a stuffed wheat sack in the large parlour and listens to the pendulum of the clock ticking as he reads.

Nellie cannot attend, but Fanny who continues to live with us, is excited by the preparations and tags along with Alice and Mr Johnston whenever he visits. William and his wife Emily will be here with their new son, Bertie, so I will have most of my children and grandchildren together again which will be wonderful.

I have written to all the other sisters as well and hope they might come. John cannot leave Cootamundra as his wife is expecting next month and Thomas has not responded, but I am hopeful of his attendance. It has been a long time since we were all together.

I hope with all my heart you can come and I will await your response.

Your loving sister

Marion



The Commonwealth Franchise Act allowing women to vote in all elections has been passed.

Molong Express 12 JUNE 1902 (Verify)



Alice Vale Leathem Johnston 1867 – 1952
Marion's eldest child – she was 10 when her
father died.

Molong
23rd July 1902

Mrs James Johnston
"Dilga" via Cumnock
NSW

My Dear Alice

I wanted to write to you at your new address to fix in my head that you have truly married and moved away forever. You are now mistress of “Dilga” and I trust you and Mr Johnston will be very happy.

Because it has been so long since your father passed away, I have not known the comfort of having a husband and a confidant for a long time. I realised today after your carriage had driven away how much I have relied on you as a companion over these years and how much your presence has meant to me. I look forward to becoming acquainted with you as a newly married woman for I am sure this will open a new dimension of your life, which you will enjoy. Mr Johnston seems a very demanding man, but I assume you know your own mind about such things and I am sure you will manage him as well as you managed your brothers.

To speak of personal matters is not considered acceptable in our society and dare I say in our family, but I will trespass here, as it is important for your wellbeing that I do, and you know that I always speak plainly.

You are no longer a young woman Alice, therefore I urge you to exercise caution in matters of family. My own mother produced a large and healthy brood without concern and I too had little trouble, but we were much younger and stronger women than you. At thirty-five, your age and constitution are against having a large number of children, even though I understand Mr Johnston is keen to fill the many rooms at Dilga with his progeny. You must ensure that you are totally recovered from your confinements before you attempt another pregnancy and this will need you to enforce your rights as a woman. It is important in a marriage to make each partner aware of the expectations of the other, so I encourage you to continue in your marriage as you have done in other parts of your life and speak your mind, particularly in matters of your continuing good health. I am sure that with a little practice and time, you will have the same willing co-operation from your husband as you did from the many children you have taught these last eighteen years.

As my eldest child and my eldest daughter, I perhaps expected a lot from you since your father died but you were always able to rise to any situation with great skill and this will hold you in good stead. You have been a comfort to me and have my great respect. I look forward to seeing another generation grow under your guidance and I look forward to hearing from you about your new life as mistress of “Dilga”.

Do not be concerned over the tone of Nellie’s letter. I think her circumstances have made her a little bitter and I hope she will grow out of that soon. Apparently her little son has been unwell again, he is apparently not a hearty

child and I think her current pregnancy is difficult as Mrs Timms has heard she is confined to bed for long periods.

On a brighter note, Fanny is looking forward to visiting you so I am inviting myself for tea on Saturday.

Your loving

Mother



William Edwards, baker was charged by the police with allowing a sow to stray about a public place. Defendant pleaded guilty, and was fined 2s 6d with 4s 10d costs. Fine paid.

Molong Express 1 March 1902



Molong
29 July 1902

Mrs Thomas Doherty
Condobolin Road
Nymagee

Dear Nellie

I heard from Mrs Timms that you have been unwell and I wanted to tell you that despite our differences, I pray for you daily and hope that all is well.

I am sure little Reginald is an enchanting child and Mrs Timms says Dorrie has grown into quite a beauty, but then she always looked like you.

I am enclosing a few little things I made for Dorrie and the baby and a piece of Alice's wedding cake, which she asked me to send to you. She was sorry not to have you at her wedding but I enclose a photograph so you may see her husband.

Fanny is well and is a very smart child and grows daily in looks.

Though we do not speak now, I hope with time that some resolution may be made between us.

With love

Mother



The other day the main spring on our press broke and we've been trusting partly to an old spring and partly to Providence ever since. We are glad that nothing worse has happened to us in answer to the prayers of a few sore critics. The mishap was very trivial one compared to that which occurred to a contemporary the other day, when the office brains (the scissors and paste pot) got lost.

Molong Express 6 October 1888



Bank Street
Molong
18 October 1903

Mrs Alice Johnston
Dilga
Cumnock

Dear Alice

Mr Dalton told me this morning that Nellie's baby boy died last week.

I wish I could go to her, but I doubt she would welcome my visit, even if she was not so far away, and I'm sure her husband wouldn't.

I grieve the child she has lost, but I also grieve the daughter I feel I have lost. I blame myself only for that tragedy, though I still stand by my standards, but standards are no comfort to me nor indeed to Nellie in that remote mining town far from all of us who love her.

I cannot condone her actions, but that does not stop me loving her. The baby she carried which she has now lost was the reason for our parting as we did. I have been searching for reasons and of course find none, but I do fear God's hand and retribution.

Frederick is bringing out the tonic Dr Harris prescribed for you when I consulted him on your behalf. He said it may alleviate some of your symptoms so I hope that is the case.

I miss you tonight my girl, as I miss Nellie. God bless you

With love

Mother



NOTICE TO ALL OUR FEMALE READERS - FEDERAL ELECTION

Now that women have won the right to vote in elections, this is a reminder that voting commences on the 16th December 1902 at several venues in the district. A large turn out is expected at all polling booths so we advise anyone wishing to cast a vote in this second federal

election, to arrive early. The booths will be open from 8am until 4 pm. Today's issue provides instructions for any women wishing to understand the voting process and we understand officials will be on hand at the various booths to assist every women who wishes to exert her right to vote.

Molong Express 16 December 1903 (VERIFY)



Bank Street
Molong
27 March 1904

Mrs Thomas Bassett
Wiley Street
Whitton

My dearest sister, Matilda,

It was so lovely to see you this week and meet your husband. Mr Bassett is a charming man and I enjoyed renewing the acquaintance of a sister I see far too infrequently. It was wonderful to see you so happy in each other's company. I know that you thought you would not marry at all, but you see what fate provides if you just allow it to know best?

I am pleased you are spending so much time travelling. You have no schoolma'am burdens and Mr Bassett's children are grown, so I agree with your decision to travel and explore this country and am happy that your last tour took you through Molong.

Alice has just told me today that she is pregnant and I am thrilled for her, though she will be nearly thirty-eight when the baby is born. I must admit to being a little worried about her health but she seems well enough, though she works very hard on Dilga as it is a large property.

I have been heartened by her adaption to the role of wife and mistress of such a large holding and I am quite fond of Mr Johnston, now that I am used

to his brusque demeanour. He appears always to be on the verge of making some statement of great importance but I think, like most self-made men, he has the insecurities of his forebears to hold him back in social circles. Alice of course with her intelligence and manners can hold her own anywhere and paves their way in social gatherings.

Alice has made Dilga a showplace. The old house was solid and substantial but under Alice's care, it has become a really comfortable home. There are enormous lounge and dining areas and a wide and cool verandah along the front, which is big enough to house the shop and the post office. There is an open space between the kitchen, which is a large shearer's kitchen, and the house, which allows a cool breeze to move right through the house. This is beneficial in shearing times when the kitchen works 24 hours a day to provide to the many farmers and shearers who gather there for the shearing.

Every item is polished to the highest possible shine and every surface has a doily or a table runner or an antimacassar, beautifully edged with lace and embroidered with Alice's dedicated handiwork. She has been preparing her glory box since she was ten so she had over twenty years accumulated linen when she finally had a house of her own. I used to wonder at her each night, sewing away on those delicate little pieces of cloth when, in my mind, I wondered if she would ever have use of them.

The house, as you would expect of Alice, runs like a well-ordered school with all the occupants responding to bells for dinner, lunch and breakfast. Alice evidently thinks there is little difference and all the staff and visitors in the house seem to fit in with her schedule.

My granddaughter Fanny has moved out to Dilga to live with Alice and help while Alice is pregnant. She lived with us for so long that Alice is as much her mother as Nellie and Mr Johnston seems very fond of Fanny too. Though she is only nine years old, she is sensible girl and very organised and is a great comfort to Alice. I do miss her.

We have lived with a lot of turmoil these past few years and I am pleased it has all been sorted. John is engaged to Harriett Dunn and they will marry next year. She is a Catholic but John has decided to convert to her religion and as much as it pains me to see him change faith, in the end, it is only a small matter and I have become quiet fond of the local priest, who calls in each evening for a sherry, as all details are plotted and papers signed. I hope he continues the tradition after their marriage for I like his sharp wit and sense of humour.

Percy has a constant companion in Mary Sparkes and I'm sure they will marry and William and Emily have two lovely little boys whom you met. Nellie is still at Nymagee and we hear little from her, but from all accounts she is well and Charles of course, is still courting Elsie Reich!!

This is a very long winded letter and I will not inflict further news of my children upon you, but even though we talked of many thing when you were here, it seems there was much we did not discuss, for fear of boring your new husband, but I think you are now up to date, so I will close and go to bed.

Enjoy your travels. I envy you the freedom to traverse this land as you are doing, but I suppose I am too old to start on any new course, so I look forward to reading your letters and learning more about this country through your first-hand accounts.

Your loving sister

Marion



We understand from one of our contemporaries that in the papers in the estate of the late Sir Henry Parkes was found a supplement from Molong Express 1904 - a copy of which Sir Henry kept in his papers

Molong Express 1904 Sydney Morning Herald



Molong Cottage Hospital
Molong
15th August 1904

Mrs John Williamson
Gurwood Street
Wagga Wagga

My dear Cecelia

Today I held in my arms Alice's new baby daughter whom they have named Jeanne Marjorie. It is amazing, that feeling which comes into your heart when you first gather up a small baby and hold it to your bosom, it never changes, be it your own child, or your grandchild. It is almost as if God knows that children need looking after and so by some divine ability makes us all protectors and providers for any babies who come our way.

Because of her age, Dr Wilson asked Alice to come into Molong for her confinement. I would not admit this to Alice, but I instructed Dr Wilson to do this some months ago. I know that modern medicine has come quite a way since I had children but the infant mortality rate is still far too high in these country areas and Alice is not a young woman anymore. I did not want to leave the life of my eldest daughter in the hands of a midwife who, experienced as she may be, does not have the medical knowledge of a doctor. As it happened, the birth was complicated and the labour extraordinarily long, but we are optimistic that all will be well.

Mr Johnson of course displayed the disappointment of all fathers at not having a son as his first born but within a short time he was holding the child and making those ridiculous noises men tend to make to new babies. He wanted to take Alice back out to Dilga but I have insisted she stay here in town for a month when she comes out of hospital where she can benefit from the presence of better help and care and I will enjoy having Fanny stay here too. I do miss that child and she seems so unhappy and forlorn of late that she might also enjoy our company.

Nellie was delivered of another daughter last month. I have not seen the baby, being born as she was at Nymagee but they have called her Blanche Maisie, after Mr Doherty's mother. I understand that she is thriving.

Your loving sister

Marion



Molong
15 December 1904

Mrs Thomas Doherty
Condobolin Rd
Nymagee

My dear Nellie,

I am enclosing a few little things for Dorrie and your new baby for Christmas. I do not know if you will be spending Christmas at Nymagee but I hope this will find you and your children well and healthy.

Alice had a little girl in August and I am of the opinion that Fred will marry Mary Sparkes next year, but I am sure you hear the news from William for I suspect he keeps in touch with you, even if he denies it when I ask.

As you have not answered any of my other letters, I assume you wish to keep a distance between us, but I wanted you to know that I miss you and regret not knowing your children. I still cannot condone your actions but perhaps you have managed to sort out your affairs and it is after all a matter for your own conscience, not mine, but I would like to think you have some peace of mind about your life.

I am a stubborn woman, you do not need me to tell you that, but I would very much like for us to be cordial at least and I am sorry that my principles sometimes get in the way of my duties as a mother. If you feel we can mend our rift, I would very much like to see you, for I fear some things cannot be said on paper as well as they can be said in person.

Would you please consider Nellie that possibility of just meeting so that we can talk? I would be happy to travel out to Nymagee after Christmas if that would suit you? Please let me know?

I hope you have a happy and peaceful Christmas and know that you are always in the thoughts and heart of your

Loving

Mother



On Tuesday, we spent half a day at the local Police Court - and were very glad we went, although we got home very hungry, an hour late for lunch. The business which occupied the bench was that 'arising out of a neighbour's dispute over the rightful ownership of some 15 turkeys, and as the case proceeded we got let right into the secrets of turkey farming, while we had a heap of amusement on top of the bargain. Judging by the lesson we got at the court, we can see there is more fun, more profit and less risk in turkey farming than there is in editing a newspaper and we have become so impressed with the idea that we intend starting our own venture soon as the New Year begins.

Molong Express 3 August 1905



Molong Express
3 August 1905

Mr Urban Sparkes
Cundumbul
Via Molong

My dear Mr Sparkes

My son Frederick has advised me tonight that he has asked you for Mary's hand in marriage. Can I say how thrilled I am at the prospect of such a delightful young woman being part of our family?

Frederick tells me that you are concerned about his future prospects of advancement, whilst ever I am the Proprietress of The Express, so I thought I would write to you direct.

You are a very successful grazier and I would not presume to comment on how you earn a living or provide for your family, and I presume you would not question me on how I run my newspaper, but I understand you are worried that my ongoing involvement with the paper will not let Frederick, John or Charles realise their full potential.

Since my husband died, I have developed the Express into a business which has not only prospered but has expanded considerably and which covers various areas of printing. With the advent of the Argus in Molong, I had to ensure diversity and took it upon myself to develop other areas for income. Our general printing business is the largest in the area and we have very good contracts with tradespeople all over this district including clients as far away as Sydney and Grafton. In addition, our newspaper circulates to one of the largest geographical areas in the state and is getting bigger each year. We are read with respect by a wide section of the community, often quoted in the Sydney and Melbourne papers and it may interest you to know that the Sydney Morning Herald reported last year that Sir Henry Parkes kept supplements from our papers amongst his personal effects.

My third son, William has indicated that although he is happy to earn his living as a compositor for the moment, he would also like to move to Coonamble with his wife in the near future and so only Charles, John and Frederick will continue with the paper. I can assure you as a businesswoman and a mother that I would not presume to engage any of my sons in a business that was unable to support them and their families.

Frederick is a fine compositor and Charles a journalist and they complement each other's skills. John is also a compositor but generally runs the administrative side of the business, so we all have our roles. I have every reason to believe that John will marry Harriett Dunn later this year and I have had a similar conversation with her father on this matter. The same applies to

Charles and Elsie, should they ever decide to wed. If I ever find myself unable to run the Express I am confident that Charles, John and Frederick will continue all the fine traditions started by their father and continued and expanded by me.

But rest assured Mr Sparkes that I have no intention of retiring from the paper whilst ever I am able to hold a pen just as I am sure you will not step down from the plough.

Now that I have allayed your fears, I hope you hold no reservations to the union of our children and I hope you and your wife will join us on Saturday evening for a small family celebration of their engagement.

With great respect

(Mrs.) Marion Leathem



Bank Street
Molong
TBA 1905

Mrs Thomas Doherty
Condobolin Rd
Nymagee

Dearest Nellie

I was shocked to read of the death of your daughter in the Cobar newspaper this week. It said she died of gastroenteritis, poor little mite and had only been unwell for a few days.

I suppose you do not have a hospital in your area but I hope you have doctors to assist you for it is a terrible disease and terribly contagious, particularly in these hot months when it is impossible to keep food cool or stop it spoiling.

You have suffered a great many sorrows in your young life Nellie and there is nothing I can say to help you, except that I regret very much the distance we have between us.

If I could turn back the clock, my opinions would not have changed but I may have acted differently and then you would not be so far away from me at this most terrible time of sorrow and loss. I would do anything to mend the rift between us and be with you to hold and comfort you just now, but your continued silence does not give me hope.

You have just lost a daughter to death but you should also remember you have another daughter very much alive and well and yearning for her mother. Fanny seems to have become more and more quiet and withdrawn of late. I thought it may be because Alice is now so preoccupied with little Jeanne and Fanny is feeling left out, but I think it is more about her missing her real mother, for she is a child with a troubled soul at the moment and no amount of inquiry will reveal the cause of her sadness.

I understand that I prompted the situation for you to leave Fanny here when you went away with Mr Doherty, but I was hoping that the ransom of your daughter might make you not go away with a man you were not free to marry. If I had known the estrangement that would take place, I would have not acted so and I take full responsibility for this action. But it is not too late.

For the love of your God Nellie, find it in yourself to contact Fanny and let her know that you love her. You do not need to take her back to your home, I doubt if she would go there now anyway, but she is entitled to your love. We all make wrong decisions in our lives from time to time, you will acknowledge that, but I never abandoned my children.

I am sad for you tonight – indeed my heart aches with your pain, but I am also angry at all the wrongs and the terrible consequences and we must both take some responsibility for those. I hope though, in this time of vulnerability, you may see it possible to extend your hand to Fanny. She needs her mother and I need my daughter.

I love you with all my heart Nellie. May God help you with this terrible loss and may he help you see reason.

Your loving

Mother



The wedding took place last Wednesday, November 29th of one of our own. John Leathem, a compositor at the Molong Express and son of Mrs Marion Leathem, the Proprietress of this paper, married Miss Harriet Dunn, daughter of Mr. Patrick Dunn of Belgravia. The wedding took place at the Molong Roman Catholic Church.

A very pleasant gathering was held afterwards at the home of Mr Dunn, which was attended by the many friends of the popular couple. They were farewelled at Molong Railway station as they departed for a four week honeymoon and will make their home at Molong upon their return.

The Molong Express - Social Mems 2 December 1905



We are happy to announce the marriage of another of our own and the youngest son of Mrs Marion Leathem of The Molong Express. Frederick Leathem, who was born in Molong, married Miss Mary Sparkes at the home of her father, Mr Urban Sparkes of Cundumbul on Monday 25th December, 1905.

A very happy gathering took place and friends and family, enjoying the double celebration of Christmas and the nuptials of the young couple, continued their merry making until late into the evening.

Mr and Mrs Leathem will enjoy a wedding tour to Melbourne before returning to Molong where they will make their home.

The Molong Express - Social Mems 30 December 1905



Molong
October 12 1906

Mrs Julia Ratliff
Russell Street
Tumut

My dear Julia

The move back to Tumut must be an interesting sidestep when you have been calling Wagga Wagga home for so long, but I certainly understand the need to attend to family matters and it seems our children direct the actions of our lives no matter how old we are or whether they speak to us or not.

I ran into Nellie's sister in law in Orange today at Dalton Bros. She is related by marriage so is not as clannish as her husband, so felt it appropriate to speak to me. She informed me that Nellie gave birth to a baby boy last week whom they have christened Thomas Edward. And I chose to pretend that I already knew, citing work matters for my lack of attendance at Nymagee, pride being my greatest sin.

They are still living at Nymagee but apparently the mine is closing there so they may be moving to Broken Hill or perhaps back to Orange. I pray it is the latter. If Nellie is in Broken Hill I have no chance of seeing her but if she lives in Orange there is a chance yet.

I have always thought myself to be the equal of anyone here in our town and have felt that I was young and enthusiastic and capable but today with one chance meeting, I feel myself to be old and useless and dated and obsolete simply because one of my daughters does not acknowledge me.

At least in my capacity of editor I have the respect of the community at large. Even if they disagree with my opinions, they recognize that I have the intelligence and fortitude to come to my own conclusions about matters in the world and I would rather be defined as opinionated than senile. I believe it is a sad situation that I find more satisfaction from a day at my desk than I do from an evening with my children. As a parent I appear to have become obsolete, so nothing will induce me to leave my position at this paper, and I

thank God that my standing as a grandparent is on the incline as I find the children more accepting and less complicated than their parents.

There are times when I miss Henry more than others and tonight is one of those times. I feel that no matter how well I try to believe that my life has been useful and purposeful, small events like this bring me to my knees with doubt and make me want to take refuge in hibernation. Of course, tomorrow, I will be back at my desk and dealing with the vagaries and problems of the paper and the local merchants but tonight I am ashamed to say that I have found some relief in tears and I do not think I have succumbed to that particular weakness since the death of my mother.

I think the era of parental respect is diminishing and that our children have had it entirely too easy. But that does sound like an old woman's comment.

I am always heartened to hear from you and I am sorry this is such a sour response to your kind letter. I have much for which to be thankful and I do not often let such comments find their mark, but as I have an editorial to write, I might unleash this anger at our local member who deserves it more than you.

I also should tell you that Maria Leonard's husband died a few months ago and she has been staying with me for a few weeks. It is lovely to have her company and she sends her regards. It seems the plight of my sisters and me that our husbands die young.

My love and wishes for your continued good health. I hope we may see each other soon.

Your loving friend

Marion Leathem



Bank Street
Molong
20th December 1906

Mrs Maria Leonard Lowe &
Mrs Henrietta Elworthy

Fitzroy Street
Grafton

My dear sisters, Maria Leonard and Henrietta

This letter will serve to bring both Christmas and New Year greetings. Your combined residence means that I need only write one letter and with the rheumatism in my right wrist, that is a Christmas gift to myself.

It has been such a busy year with the children, Fred and Mary had a baby girl, Kathleen, Alice had a baby son, Wrixon, Nellie had a son, Thomas Edward and next year we are expecting news of a baby for John and Harriet. I thought perhaps Charles might finally wed Elsie but it seems not to be. He is a delightful uncle to all the children and Fanny especially loves him but I am beginning to doubt he will ever marry. If I were Elsie I would hurry him along but I cannot interfere, so he continues to live with me and we muddle along together.

Fanny came over to visit with Alice and the new baby the other day and she minds little Jeanne whilst Alice cares for Wrix. I am not sure what Alice would do without her. Dilga is such a busy place these days and Mr Johnston is a determined grazier. I thought when Mr. Johnston had children of his own, he might change his attitude to Fanny but he seems to pay her the same attention he does his own children, for which I am thankful.

I saw in the Sydney Morning Herald that Ernest Elworthy has become a director of the Daily Examiner in Grafton - another Elworthy in the newspaper business! Perhaps with all our newspaper connections, we should have formed our own dynasty!

My love and prayers are with you both for a happy Christmas. With you both in the kitchen, my mouth waters at the prospect of all the good things which might be on your dinner table. Perhaps next year I can join you.

With love

Marion



Bank Street
Molong
16 June 1907

Miss Louisa Phillips
C/- Mr James Johnston
"Dilga"
Cumnock

My dearest Fanny

I was very pleased to receive the beautifully knitted scarf and your lovely letter for my birthday. How kind of you dear, to remember and how thoughtful to make the scarf in my favourite colour. You knit very well and I was showing everyone the fine embroidery at the ends when I wore it to church today. I think you must take after your mother as she always made beautiful handiwork whereas I have little patience for it.

Of course you may come and stay with us for a while. We are all excited at the prospect of a visit and I will have an afternoon tea for you to renew all your acquaintances from this area. There are a great many people in Molong who remember you and will not believe how much you have grown up and I have already made a note in the paper that you will be coming to visit so we can expect lots of visitors. I enclose a copy for you so you can see your name in print.

I am sure Aunt Alice will manage without you so you may cease to worry on that.

No I have not heard anything from your mother. I am sure she is just busy with the babies and I believe the mail is unreliable in such a far flung place. I understand that you are disappointed not to hear from her, but perhaps she will answer one of your letters soon. Persistence is the best way to get what you want, so keep writing. She does love you dear, but her life is complicated and perhaps when you are older you will understand her actions better.

In the meantime, I am sending you a book that you might like, by Miss Jane Austen called *Pride and Prejudice*. I was rather fond of one of the characters, Mr Darcy when I was your age so I will be interested in your opinion.

You might like to know we have renamed Rex, Houdini, after the mesmerist who has apparently escaped from a locked cage, underwater, in 57 seconds. Rex exceeded that skill by escaping from his chained collar, in the locked stable, to reappear under my desk in the Express with a loaf of Mr Champion's bread in his mouth. I have reimbursed Mr Champion and bought a tighter collar for the dog.

Uncle Charles will drive out to collect you on Tuesday and we hope you can stay for at least a week.

With all my love

Grandmother



The Molong Express
Bank Street
Molong
25 January 1907

Mr F. T. Wimble
F.T. Wimble & Co. Limited
Post Office Place
Melbourne

Dear Mr Wimble,

I know that your sons have now taken advisory roles in the business, as have mine, but I am too old to start dealing with someone new when placing orders for new equipment and I have always trusted your judgement.

We need to upgrade our press to something faster and more reliable and I wonder if you could give me the benefit of your knowledge. As we are a small paper, we do not need the size of a Foster press but I would like your opinion of it in comparison to the Furnival Commercial.

Would you be so kind to provide me with pricing for both machines and your considered opinion on which may best suit us. We would be happy to look at a second hand machine if it is in good order and has a reliable history.

I enjoyed your article in the last issue of the Reminder on the retirement of Mr J.F. Archibald and 'his blue pruning pencil' editing style. I have subscribed to the Bulletin since 1882 when the subscriptions assisted him and Mr. Haynes to pay their libel suit and be released from Darlinghurst Gaol, as I wanted to support free speech in the press, but I closed that subscription when Mr Archibald retired last year. The tone of the magazine changed when he stepped down and I find I miss his satire and whimsy.

I trust that you are well. I am not sure if I will be travelling to Melbourne again, but I do enjoy our correspondence and always value your opinion

Kind regards

Marion Leathem



Bank Street
Molong
20 October 1907

Mrs Cecelia Williamson
Gurwood Street
Wagga Wagga

My dear Cecelia

I am inviting myself for a visit next month. I have to attend an exhibition in Melbourne and thought I might stay with you for a few days on the way back. I hope that is convenient.

We were reporting the other day that now that there is telephone line between Melbourne and Sydney, it will not be long before we have service to Molong and then when I need to speak to you, it will be a simple matter of picking up a handset and making arrangements immediately, with no long

wait for an answer before finalising one's plans. How convenient will that be? We were speculating in The Express if the telephone will make letters obsolete, but I am not sure if anything will ever replace the pleasure of seeing the handwriting of a regular correspondent on the front of an envelope.

I will save all my news until I see you. Alice has offered to travel down with me as she has never been to Melbourne, and I welcome the company on that long trip. Fanny will stay at Dilga and take care of the children and prepare the meals, so Alice may travel with a free conscience. We will be staying at "Raheen" with the Wrixons in Melbourne.

Let me know by return post if this does not suit you, otherwise I will see you on the 16th November.

Your loving sister

Marion



Bank Street
Molong
12 June 1906

Mrs Julia Ratliff
Russell Street
Tumut

My dear Julia

I am writing to say how thrilled I am about your planned trip to Europe and America. With travel so comfortable and convenient these days, one need not forgo the luxury of one's own surroundings just because one chooses to see the world.

I see the Lusitania has crossed to London in 4 days from New York this week, beating its old record by half a day and with Mr Wright perfecting his flying machine, one can only guess at the possibilities ahead. It took us five

months to travel from Cork to Port Phillip when we immigrated, in very different conditions. How far we have progressed in that short span of time!

I had hoped to see you on my way to Melbourne but you will instead be on the high seas, so that will not be possible, but I look forward to your letters telling me of your adventures with your daughter. I do envy you.

Charles suggested this morning that as the Australian Parliament has introduced a pension for British subjects over the age of 65, I might look at retiring from work. I cannot write here my thoughts, for they were unchristian to say the least, but I believe my expression was enough as there were no further comments on the matter. Pensions are for those too infirm to work. I do not fit that category now, nor any time soon.

Enjoy your adventure. I am pleased that you, like me, feel we are still sprightly enough to do just what we want.

With all my love

Marion



**The Molong Express Girl
Promotion photograph –
the woman's dress is made from newspaper –
in fact The Molong Express**

Bank Street
Molong
16 June 1908

Miss Louisa Phillips
Mr James Johnston
C/- Dilga

My dearest Fanny,

One of my contemporaries sent me a copy of the London Spectator magazine, which has published a poem by a young Australian girl, Dorothea McKellar who is living in London but originally comes from Gunnedah. I thought it very touching and knowing your love of poetry, thought I would send it to you. Perhaps you would keep the copy for me as I would like to send it onto my sister Matilda when you finish with it.

I am also sending a new book, My Brilliant Career, by a young woman who grew up near Tumut. Her mother was a friend of my mother's. The book is a little rebellious and was published a few years ago but I quite like the writing and it is certainly a very realistic Australian theme, although I do not really like the title.

I am gladdened to see women making such advances in literature in this country and early copies are quite often sent to newspapers hoping for a mention, which I am always happy to accommodate if they have merit. I am happy to pass onto you anything which I think is suitable for your age, as I know books are hard to come by at Dilga.

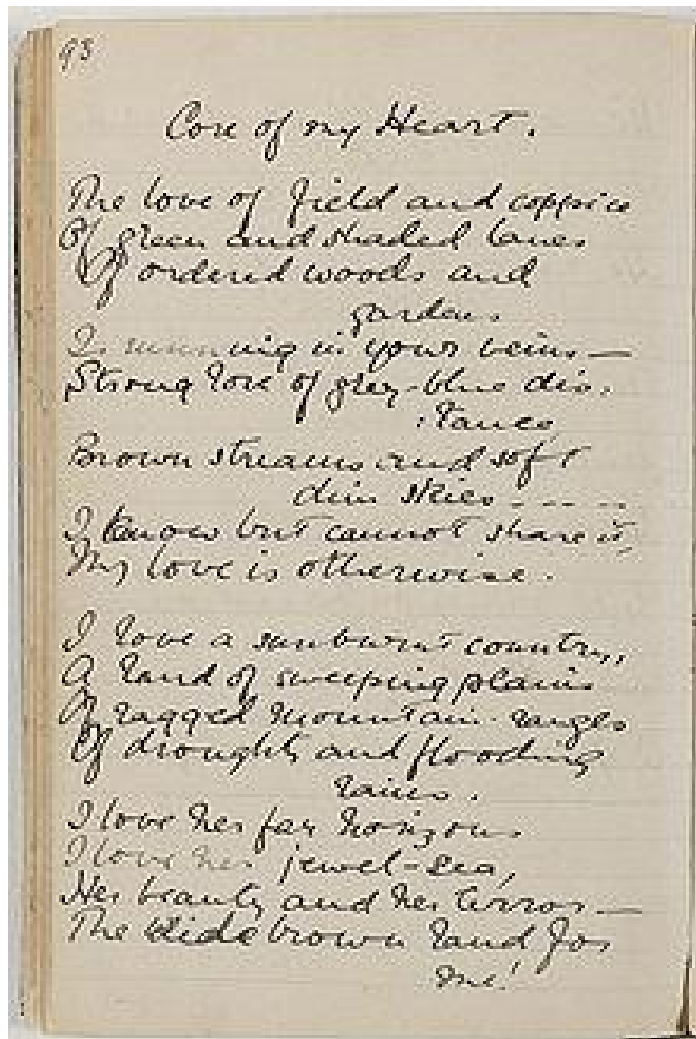
There is another I will send when I finish reading it myself, called We of the Never Never by Mrs Aeneas Gunn, which is an interesting tale of life on a cattle station in the Northern Territory. It is nice to read for a change about the accomplishment of competent women rather than the dare devil, horse riding shenanigans of bushrangers and drovers. Although I admire Mr Lawson and Mr Patterson, there are only so many accounts one can read of the marvellous men of the outback and their daring feats. In my experience, women have always done more than the men, done it in crinolines and have never had the need to make every minor accomplishment, a suspenseful yarn.

It is far too long since I have seen any of you, so I will get Charles to bring me out to Dilga on Sunday after Church. Please tell Aunt Alice that I will bring out the bolt of cloth she ordered for re-covering her chairs. I also hope to have news of John and Harriet's' new baby which is due this week.

I look forward to seeing you dear girl

All my love

Grandmother



Mackellar's notebook with the first two verses of
Core of my Heart – I Love a Sunburnt Country.

Bank Street
Molong
June 18 1909

Mrs Thomas Doherty
C/- "Kangarooobie"
Via Orange

My dear Nellie

Your sister in law told me yesterday that you had a little boy last week in Orange. I had not realised you were back in the district.

Congratulations on your baby. Your sister in law assures me that he is a bonny little chap and that you have named him Clarence, which must be a Doherty name.

I thought perhaps that now you are only a short distance away, you may consent to me coming to see you? It has been nearly ten years since we have seen each other and much has happened in that time. Perhaps we might find that we have a few things in common, and can be friends again and let the past be in the past.

I deeply regret my actions Nellie, I have written that before, but this rift is not just with me but with your sister and brothers and all of us would like to see you again.

Could you find it in your heart to forgive me?

I will travel over next Tuesday afternoon, unless I hear from you in the meantime.

With love

Mother



Bank Street
Molong
24 June 1909

Mrs Thomas Doherty
C/- "Kangaroobie"
Via Orange

Dear Nellie

I received your one sentence note today telling me I am not welcome, so I will heed your wishes, but I cannot do that without a response of my own.

I thought in being a mother in your own right, you might have some comprehension about how I feel. I thought losing two of your children might make you value the family you have who are alive. I thought with maturity there might be some sense of compassion in you for those of us who loved and supported you and your daughters over the years.

You were always one to hold a grudge and I see that has not changed, neither has your vindictive streak.

But when I think about how you have behaved towards your own daughter, Fanny, ignoring her letter and ignoring her existence, I see that any pleading on my part is useless for you still deal with any conflict in your life in the way you did when you were a little girl. You have never been a realist but until now, I had not realised that you are also a coward. Rather than admit that you too may have been at fault, you walk away and pretend it is not your responsibility and let someone else pick up the pieces.

Now that you have other children, I thought you might want to make amends to Fanny and approach her for forgiveness, the way I have tried to do with you, but there appears to be flaw in your character which will not let you admit you have made an error of judgement. Unfortunately, the person who has suffered most from this error is Fanny and unlike me, none of this has been her fault.

I accept that you and I will probably not speak again and that saddens me, as despite all this contempt you show me, I still love you as only a mother can love a child. I am hoping that under your many layers of self-pity and the perceived wrongs you have suffered at the hands of your family, that you still love your daughter and that you will make an attempt to tell her so.

Fanny still resides at Dilga. She is a sweet and competent and sensible young woman, but there is a great sadness about her of late, which I can only attribute to her longing to know her mother. She used to wait till I came out to Dilga and ask to go and look at her flower garden and then ask me every possible question about you. What you were like, what you looked like, how you did your hair, where you are now and most pitifully, why you do not want to have anything to do with her. I have told her that is a problem between you and me, not a problem between you and her. There is no reason for her to believe otherwise. She needs you Nellie. It is never too late to replace the boards in a bridge which already exists, it is only when the

bridge has been washed away altogether that there is no hope. I beg of you to contact her, Nellie. In the name of God, I beg you.

I feel sorry we won't see each other again, but if you should change your mind, know that my door and my heart will always be open to one, who was always,

Your loving

Mother



Molong
19th October 1909

Mrs. James Johnston
"Dilga"
Via Cumnock

My dear Alice,

I received your letter today with the terrible news and I am at a loss to know how this has happened.

I cannot understand how a child as good and sweet as Fanny would find herself in this predicament. I understand now why she has not been answering my letters, she is too ashamed of her actions. I should have guessed earlier as when I last saw her she seemed so withdrawn and unlike her usual self and seemed to be avoiding me.

You must of course find out who is responsible as they must be brought to account for their actions and certainly if it is a labourer on the farm, you must ensure they depart the district before news of this can become gossip. I assume Fanny in searching for companionship or romance has found herself seduced by some scoundrel and I hope Mr Johnston takes a firm hand when he finds the culprit, for marriage is out of the question, she is not much more than a baby herself.

Considering your own condition and your previous miscarriages, you must not put yourself into a situation of duress and endanger your own health, but we must make arrangements as soon as possible to ensure that Fanny's condition does not become known in the district for it would ruin her reputation forever.

To answer your question, I do not know whether it is best to write to Nellie. Her neglect of the child up until now has been scandalous and I doubt if she will rise to the occasion now that her daughter is in this situation, but I am disappointed that Fanny has unwittingly followed in her mother's footsteps. I had hoped of better things from her.

I will make some enquiries about suitable accommodation away from the area and in the meantime I will leave the management of this to your good judgement. Perhaps nature will intervene and relieve us all of his burden, but we cannot rely on that and I fear to pray for something like that is not a Christian thing to do.

Please take care of yourself and I will let you know as soon as I have arranged accommodation for Fanny. We must keep this only between ourselves.

With love

Mother



Bank Street
Molong
20 October 1909

Dr Boazman
"The Hermitage"
Church Street
Parkes

Dear Dr Boazman

I write to you in the strictest confidence concerning a young woman of my acquaintance who has found herself in an unfortunate position and needs accommodation and care.

We do not know when her child is expected but I would estimate in the first quarter of the new year. I understand you can provide accommodation and light work for such women until their due date and then assist them with arranging an adoption or removal of the child to an orphanage.

I would be most grateful for your advice and list of fees for such a service.

I thank you in advance and trust that my details are secure with you.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marion Leathem



Bank Street
Molong
1 November 1909

Mrs James Johnston
"Dilga"
Cumnock

My dear Alice

I have enclosed a letter from Dr Boazman of Parkes who will be able to assist Fanny.

Fanny will need to stay at The Cambridge Hotel, which is run by Mrs Medlyn who is a good Christian and a gentlewoman, from all accounts. Mrs Medlyn will arrange board and meals for Fanny in return for light work in the hotel as a chambermaid. Dr Boazman will attend to her when the baby is due and Mrs Medlyn will help find a home for the child.

You must make Fanny understand that it is imperative she remain silent around all these proceedings and not make it known what has happened. Once the baby is adopted she can return to Dilga, if you are prepared to have her there or we can find a position for her in a suitable home in the district.

In the meantime, I am suggesting we say she is going to stay with her mother. As much as I do not like intrigue, we have the reputation of all involved to consider and that seems the best solution.

There is a coach to Parkes each Monday. Can you make sure that Fanny is on it with enough funds to see her through this, as she will need to pay Dr Boazman for his services and her stay there? As I do not expect Mr Johnston to pay for this unfortunate mistake, I am enclosing a cheque to cover the costs until we find out the name of the father. Have you had any success in getting this information from Fanny? If not, I will write to her, for the fellow must be made accountable, both morally and in a pecuniary way, as the financial loss may convince him of his wrong, even if the moral implications do not.

I trust that you are taking care of yourself during this time. Please give my love to Jeanne and Wrix. I assume you will bring them to stay with me around your due date.

With love

Mother



Bank Street
Molong
20 December 1909

Miss Louisa Phillips
C/- The Cambridge Hotel
Parkes

My dear Fanny

With Christmas approaching, I thought I would send you up a few things you will need for yourself after the birth of this unfortunate baby. Although the child is to be adopted, you must still care for it until a suitable home can be found so will need swaddling and nightdresses as well as napkins. I am also enclosing some linen, so that you may make any clothes you need for yourself.

It is not perhaps the most desirable Christmas present but at least it is practical and may help you fill in your evenings whilst you are at the Cambridge.

I have heard from Mrs Medlyn when she last wrote that you have settled in well and that your health is good. I trust this state will continue, as it is good of her to take you in when you are in this condition.

It is best if you stay there for Christmas, though it will be lonely for you, but we have all done our best to hide the circumstances from the family and acquaintances and need to maintain our discretion.

I do not understand why you go on protecting the father of this child. It is obvious that he does not care for you or respect you for he has not stepped forward to assist you at this terrible time and he is obviously an underhand type.

Once a home is found for the child we can try to establish a life for you in a place where your past is not known and you may continue as if this unfortunate event had not happened, but I trust that unlike some other young woman, you will not find yourself in this situation again. Decent men will not respect a woman who does not respect herself. I fear you have been reading too many trashy novels and I hope you will now find more wisdom in the Bible.

You will be pleased to know that Aunt Alice is well and that her condition has stabilised. You will understand why she does not correspond with you at present.

I hope that you will be able to reflect on your actions over Christmas and the circumstances which have caused you to be on your own at this time. Perhaps next year we can be celebrating together with all of this behind us.

With love

Grandmother



Bank Street
Molong
1 January 1910

Mrs Cecelia Williamson
Peter Street
Wagga Wagga

My dearest Cecelia

I received your letter yesterday inviting me to travel with you to Grafton to stay with Henrietta and Maria Leonard, but circumstances dictate I must decline, as much as I would like to go.

Alice has her third baby due in March and John and Harriet's baby, Myra has been unwell so they have been away in Sydney with her at a specialist doctor. I feel I should be around my family at the moment and it is too hot to travel.

The temperature on our verandah was over one hundred degrees on Tuesday and Wednesday and there has been substantial bushfires in the district, but that did not stop some enthusiastic local youths setting off Chinese fireworks last night and setting fire to a haystack in Mr Sherringham's paddock. The ensuing fire and activity quite overshadowed the New Years Eve concert at the School of Arts, as half the men's chorus were required to form a water chain to douse the flames.

The fire was more entertaining than the concert so the audience, thankful of the cooler air in the evening and the change of program, packed up the remains of the supper and it was had, picnic style on the side of the Manildra Road, only ending when old Sandy Roberts, who for reasons unknown, with his bagpipes in his buggy, gave a passable rendition of Auld Lang Syne and the gathered mass formed a large circle around the still smouldering haystack and saw in the new year.

It was not the planned way of the evening, but was quite gratifying as there is something about a bonfire that is good for one's soul. We gathered around and looked into the flames and there was some liberating sense of seeing

the old year go up in the smoke. I think we were all a little disappointed when the fire was finally out and we had no sensible reason to linger, but the story will make good copy so I will sit down to write that next, as it is more entertaining than any other serious news at present. Mr Deakin and Mr Fisher seemed determined to keep the post of Prime Minister revolving between them like some children's game and Lord Kitchener's visit is generating interest in the Northern Territory as the colony makes small moves away from England's petticoats, but I think I my readers would prefer some amusement in their weekly paper and so would I.

I am sorry I cannot accompany you, even though the thought of a carefree frolic with my sisters is most appealing, but I trust you will give my love to our family in the north and I wish you a safe and happy trip.

That 1910 be a happy and less eventful year for us all is the wish of

Your loving sister

Marion



Molong
31st January 1910

Dr Boazman
The Hermitage Private Hospital
Church Street
Parkes

Dear Dr Boazman

I am inquiring into the condition of Miss Louisa Phillips, who is currently a patient of yours.

I am in correspondence with her but am disturbed of late by the morbid tone of her letters and the thoughts expressed therein, and was wondering if she is quite well.

I would appreciate it if you could look in on her a little more frequently as I am concerned that her mind has been affected by the events around her. She will not advise us as to the identity of the baby's father and I was wondering if she has spoken of such matters to you. I understand this is a confidence between you and your patient, but this young woman does not have a mother in whom to confide and I thought perhaps she may have given you some information which will assist us in helping her through this plight.

I understand from Mrs Medlyn that the baby should arrive in the next fortnight and I want to give you my assurance that I would like Miss Phillips to have the best possible attention and care available and that any bills for this care and your time should be sent to me for payment. Would you please mark any correspondence to me as private and confidential?

Although Miss Phillips is there on her own, she is not without family and friends who care for her and I would be pleased if you could confirm this to her when you next see her, as it may give her comfort to feel she is not entirely alone.

Would you please advise me by telegraph, as soon as the baby is born so that I know she is safe?

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marion Leathem



The Late Dr. Ross.

Dr Andrew Hendry Ross, M.D., who represented Molong in the State Legislative Assembly for 25 years, died at his residence, Albion Street, Surry Hills, on Saturday, at the advanced age of 81 years. The funeral of the late Dr. Andrew Ross took place at the Waverley Cemetery on Monday.

The Molong Argus 4 February 1910



Molong
8 February 1910

Mrs James Johnston
"Dilga"
Cumnock

My dear Alice

When I opened my Bible this morning, I read,

"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house,
he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

Timothy 5:8

And it burned my conscience so deeply, that I have decided to go to Parkes
on the afternoon coach to be with Fanny

I am troubled by her situation and although my common sense says I should
remain at a distance from this scandal to protect the identity of Fanny and all
of her family, I cannot in all conscience let her endure what is to be endured
alone

I will write when I have news.

With love

Mother



Cambridge Hotel
Parkes
10 February 1910

Mrs James Johnston
"Dilga"
Cumnock

My dear Alice

I thought you and your husband should know that Fanny was delivered of a son this morning at six am. He is a healthy little boy weighing six pounds and three ounces and Fanny is well, although it was a long and difficult labour and she is so thin and pale, I am worried about her recovery from this ordeal.

She has called the baby Douglas D'arcy Phillips, which is a name much grander than his beginnings or his prospects.

It is now nearly midnight on this day when I sat beside my eldest granddaughter while she gave birth in a hospital which caters for unwed mothers in a town where she is not known, except as another unfortunate woman who had made an error of judgement. It was not an experience I had anticipated, especially now that I am nearly at the end of my allotted span and although the birth of a child is usually a moment for celebration, there was no sense of celebration today, only a deep sadness and morbidity which I am still unable to relive, or in fact understand.

I have been sitting with Fanny on and off today as a way of comforting her and we have spoken of many things and said words, which might otherwise have remained unsaid had her tongue not been loosened by her own baptism of pain and I am still shaken and sad by all that I have learned

But I am obfuscating as a way of avoiding what needs to be said, for fear of destroying all that lies between us, Alice, but I see no way of avoiding this letter any more than Fanny could avoid giving birth.

Fanny told me today that your husband is the father of her son. She also told me that you knew this, as she had approached you when she first suspected there was something awry. That you have kept this from me, hurts me deeply, but not as much as the web of deceit which has developed around this story since you first informed me of Fanny's condition.

I am angry at myself for all the thoughts I have harboured about Fanny since you first told me of her pregnancy, believing her of loose morals and no self-respect and blaming myself for the circumstances which meant she was without a mother in the very years she needed one. Angry at Nellie for letting

her own interests come before that of her daughter and marrying in such a way that I was disinherited from the love of my youngest daughter. Angry at the shame I felt Fanny's condition brought us all and the damage it would do to the reputation of you and Mr Johnston and myself and the Molong Express if people found out that one of my own has dabbled in such muddied waters. And angry most of all that through all this self-recrimination, I have been thanking God for the compassion of Mr Johnston for the niece thrust upon him by marriage and his acceptance and responsibility for her upkeep.

So I suppose that most of all I am angry at being deceived by a man I had come to look upon with fondness and respect. I consider myself a good judge of character and to find that I have been fooled by his authoritarian approach and that he is the very worst kind of perpetrator of sins. A man who molests a child and the niece of his wife. The level of disgust I feel when I think about his actions has made me physically ill and I have not been able to leave my room since Fanny told me the truth.

And you Alice, what of your role in this situation? I do not of course blame you for the depredations of your husband and I do pity you for finding that the man you have married is capable of this despicable behaviour, but I do blame you for not telling me earlier so that something better could have been done for Fanny. We have cast her in the role she does not deserve, rather than seeing her for the victim she is. I have never been so ashamed of myself in my entire life.

I hope by tomorrow I can think more rationally but tonight, not even my Bible can provide solace. I will pray for Fanny tonight as I will pray for you and your children. And I will pray for this poor boy child who has been thrust into a world with not a hope for any decent future. And I will also pray for the blessed relief of sleep and wisdom to know how best to address all that lies before us.

Mother



10 February 1910

Parkes

My dearest Henry

What to do, what to do?

I have been thinking of ways to kill him. I have imagined him grovelling for mercy at my feet and me looking him in the eye as I place the gun to his head and pull the trigger. I imagine a noose around his neck and me kicking the box out from under him then watching him choke painfully as he twists at the end of a rope. I imagine castrating him, as he lies tied to the fence and then leaving him to bleed to death in the paddock. If I were a man I think no one would question my action, seeing it as justifiable homicide. He deserves no mercy.

I am nearly seventy years old, I doubt they would hang me, and I am after all not afraid of death. But if my reasons for killing James Johnston were used as part of the court case to prosecute me, what would be the repercussions for my children, especially Alice and Fanny? No one knows better how the press would use this story to hound Alice and Fanny and Alice's children.

Though Fanny is only a child, her reputation and actions would be questioned, probably more by women than men, for women see wickedness in their own before they see it in men. She would never be able to hold her head up again and she is only fourteen, she has her whole life to live and she does not need the stigma of these foul deeds to haunt her more than they already do. And Alice, pregnant with that scoundrel's child, what of Alice?

James Johnston deserves no mercy. If I stay silent, I am letting him get away with the foulest deed. If I call for justice, Fanny and Alice will have no reputation at all – and we will all be a curiosity in the press.

It would be best if he did the decent thing and blew off his head or jumped into the river but his actions to date have shown little moral conscience and I doubt he is losing any sleep tonight whilst I sit here and contemplate the blackest of crimes.

Dear God, preserve me from these evil thoughts and show me the best action. For the first time in my life, I think about not waking from my sleep tomorrow and the relief that would be, but that helps no one.

That I am writing a letter to you Henry when you have been dead these past thirty years is not some measure of my sanity tonight, but of the fact that there is not another soul in whom I can confide over this.

I do not know what I will do tomorrow, but tonight I need sleep and the release of getting this anger out of my system, for until I do, I will not form sensible solutions for us tomorrow.

Your

Marion



Cambridge Hotel
Parkes
13 February 1910

Mrs James Johnston
"Dilga"
Cumnock

My dear Alice

Fanny remains in hospital but is getting stronger. The child so closely resembles your husband that any observer would notice the likeness at once.

Fanny has reluctantly agreed to allow the baby to be adopted out to a local family and Mrs. Medlyn has been very kind in suggesting suitable parents. Fanny wanted to keep the baby and Dr Boazman, Mrs Medlyn and I have been distracted trying to make her understand the impossible nature of that desire.

It is of course impossible for Fanny to return to Dilga so she must either come back to Molong or find a position for herself on a property in the area

where she is not known, although I had hoped that Nellie might rise to the occasion, if I write and explain the circumstances, which I have not yet done.

I cannot stay any longer in Parkes so will take the evening coach back to Molong as there are business matters which require my attention and I have secured the advertising of John Meagher & Sons for The Express, so must set up the pages for Saturday's paper. Fanny will return in a few weeks when she is well enough and the baby's adoption is complete.

In the meantime there are practical matters that demand your attention.

I leave you to deal with Mr Johnston and of course do not wish to become involved in the more personal realms of your life, but it should be made clear that your dignity must count for all at this time, for the sake of your children. I am also very concerned about your approaching confinement. If it would help you to send Jeanne and Wrix to me so that you have some time for your own situation, I can send Charles over for them tomorrow in the buggy. It is imperative that no one must know what truly lies behind this situation for your reputation in the community will be sullied even if the actions which have brought about this scandal are not your own. Men in particular will arise from the ashes of any situation, but as women we must second guess all adversaries and present a spotless life. It is not fair but it is sadly a truth. I would not want to see you hurt my dear, even though I understand the pain and the anguish of this infidelity, but you must gather yourself and be ready for any backlash. Dignity is a distinguished mantle and those who wear it well are protected from many storms. Don yours now Alice and let it serve to hold you in good stead through this ordeal.

For all our sakes this scandal must be kept within the family and I will try to find a suitable place for Fanny with a good family if she chooses not to come back to Molong. I am sure under the circumstances Mr Johnston will fund her travel and accommodation in Parkes as I am extensively out of pocket and would appreciate a reimbursement of my own costs.

I have chosen not to write to Nellie about this. I am not sure if that is the right thing to do, but it is a decision I have made after much deliberation. If it is cast up to me in the future, it will form just one of the many grievances Nellie has with me, so I am prepared to endure that.

I am in the miserable position of being put between my two daughters and I am not of clear mind what to advise either of you. My own marriage was short but happy and your father and I worked together to build a family and a business. I always felt that I had your father's total trust and devotion and I

do not know how to advise you at this time. If you were not with child, your options would be greater, but as your confinement is but a few weeks away, you have no option but to make the best of the situation.

I have prayed for help for you all and have not given up hope that some solution will come to me. Mr Johnston's actions are totally despicable and I cannot bear to even speak to him. His own father has written me today, as he is quite devastated. He is so very fond of you but the Scottish clannishness is strong and I suppose he must stand by his son.

I do not feel I can ever set foot in any house where your husband dwells if I am to remain civil. I will expect the children tomorrow and you, if you care to come.

All my love

Mother



Stray Pars

During the flood, the Darling River at Bourke rose to a height of 35 ft

The King of Sweden has undergone a successful operation for appendicitis

A Japanese photographer who was cinematographing Prince Ito's reception at Harbin, actually cinematographed the assassination of the veteran Japanese statesman. The photographer sold the film for 1500 pounds sterling

Last year 816 illegitimate children were born in NSW, no less than 177 of the mothers being from 14 to 17 years of age

Molong Express February 19 1910



Bank Street
Molong
6 March 1910

Mrs Thomas Doherty
"Kangaroobie"
Orange

Dear Nellie

I understand correspondence from me is unwelcome, but in this instance I need your help so have no choice but to write.

Fanny has run away and we are unable to find her. She gave birth to a child in Parkes three weeks ago, in circumstances I do not want to divulge in this letter, and had agreed to put the child out for adoption. For some reason she changed her mind and has run away from the hotel where she has been living. She left in the middle of the night and no one saw her go or knows how she managed to get through the locked gate.

She has very little money and is quite thin and weak since the baby was born, so we are very worried about her. She has not returned to Dilga and as far as we know, she knows no one in this area.

The ticket master at the railway station does not remember seeing a woman with a baby but we can think of no other way she would have travelled given her condition and the age of the baby

She was very upset at the prospect of the baby's adoption and had signed the papers but told the matron she had changed her mind. The matron told her it was too late and that she had made the right decision, but Fanny obviously thinks otherwise.

We do not know where she has gone Nellie and we are all very concerned about her safety and the state of her mind. I know that you do not want to talk to either Alice or me, and I doubt she will return to you, but from common courtesy, would you please let us know if you see or hear from her.

I know this may also displease you, but the Matron tells me Fanny has asked people to address her as Marion. She signed herself as Marion Phillips when she registered the baby's birth. I tell you this only in the event you hear of her.

Mother



Bank Street
Molong
7 April 1910

Mr James Johnston
"Dilga"
Cumnock

Dear Mr Johnston

Alice asked me to let you know that she was delivered of a baby girl this morning whom she will call Jessie Cecelia. It was a very difficult birth, and will certainly be her last confinement, for she has suffered a great deal and will need rest for several weeks.

For that reason, she will not be returning to Dilga for the foreseeable future, nor will the children. Could you please arrange to pack up the clothes for all three of them and send them in on the express coach?

When Alice is well enough, she will no doubt be in contact but in the meantime I suggest your presence is not required at the hospital and certainly not at my home.

If you have heard any news of Fanny, or Marion as she now chooses to call herself, I would be grateful if you could let me know. She is only a child, with no means of supporting herself. But you already know that, however she may still contact you if she is really desperate.

Marion Leathem



This is the first time in the history of Federated Australia that the electors will have the opportunity of voting for either Liberalism or Labor-Socialism. Those directly opposed to the Labor party, were in the past separated on the question of freetrade and protection, but a fiscal truce having been arrived at gave these two old parties an opening to come together and fight under one banner.

Molong Express April 9 1910



Bank Street
Molong
15 June 1910

Mrs Julia Ratliff
Russell Street
Tumut

My dear Julia

Thank you for your most welcome letter with your birthday wishes. It arrived this morning in time for me to read it over breakfast. It was full of bright and happy images which warmed my soul on this chilly morning. For the first time in my life I am feeling my age, although I would never admit that to the children, but father lived until his eighties and I have no reason to believe I will not do the same and as long as I have my faculties, I will continue to work.

I appreciated you updating me on your children and their news and it seemed such a sensible thing to do I thought I would do the same for you.

Alice has three children, the youngest born earlier this year. She and the children were staying with me for a while after the birth of the youngest in April but she has now gone home to Dilga.

Charles continues to manage the paper under my guidance and court Elsie Reich under his own. The paper is doing well.

John and Harriet have two daughters, but their youngest Myra suffers the same asthma that afflicted father all his life and is often unwell. John is our printer.

William and Emily have two sons. William threatens daily to go farming, but is still setting type. We will lose him one day to ploughs and cattle.

Nellie has had six children, two from her first marriage and four from her second but sadly has lost two. I have not seen her for ten years. Her husband is a miner and they move around quite a lot.

Fred and Mary have a dear little daughter and Fred is still our compositor.

You probably know more up to date news of my sisters Cecelia, Alice and Matilda, as they live nearer to you but I have regular correspondence from Henrietta and Maria Leonard who appear to be having a very satisfying time in Grafton.

I wish you lived closer Julia. Although I have many acquaintances in the district, I have no friends as intimate as you. I think really close friendships can only be made when you are young or when your children are small. My position in this town has dictated I stay at a distance from most people, for you would be surprised how many seek favour to keep quiet about an issue or promote an issue, which will either harm or benefit them. After forty three years at this desk, I believe most people know I cannot be swayed, but I prefer to keep my 'dignified' image as it tends to intimidate the faint-hearted.

I notice Mr Deakin has been overtaken for the third time as Prime Minister by Mr Fisher. The nonsense which goes on in parliament is very unsatisfactory. If a woman were running the country, she would know how to control the dissenters and get on with the business at hand. It is however, good to see that we will finally have our own currency and our own navy, although I doubt the two ships proposed will do much to protect our extended shoreline from attack, but hopefully our distance from the French and the Spanish will mean we need not worry about their depredations and there are no nations near us

to fear. With King George V on the throne, England may well get back her gumption and rule the seas again.

I must finish now and go to bed. I find sleep eludes me these days and I do most of my correspondence until well after midnight but I still manage to be at the office by eight am. I like to keep my mind occupied, for a quiet mind opens itself to unpleasant memories and as I get older, I find I want to question some of the decisions I have made in my earlier years. But as there is no purpose in travelling that path, I will keep on as I do now.

Keep well my dearest friend

With love

Marion Leathem



Bank Street
Molong
15 June 1912

Mr C R Barry
Commercial Bank
Molong

Dear Charles

I wish to establish a bank account for one of my grandchildren, Louisa Alice Marion Phillips, in trust, until she reaches the age of twenty-one, which will be on the 19th July 1916.

I do not have a current address for her as she is travelling, but I will be enclosing a document in my will regarding this account, should she find herself in need of money. I trust you will administer the balance until it passes to her. Please place the funds at a term which gives the greatest growth for the present, expiring on the required date.

If you have any documents which require signing, please let me know and I'll come to your office in person rather than you coming to The Express office as I would like to keep this information confidential at the moment.

I would also like to invite you to an informal gathering at my house tonight where my children have arranged a celebration for my seventieth birthday. They seem to think that reaching one's allotted span is cause for celebration, but as I intend to live at least another ten years, I do not see the need, however, I do enjoy having my family and friends about me and as we have known each other for so long, you fit into both categories.

I thank you for your discretion and assistance with this matter and remain,

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marion Leathem



Bank Street
Molong
20th December 1912

Mrs Thomas Doherty
Linsley Street
Cobar

My dear Nellie

I know you are intending to ignore every letter I send to you but that does not mean I intend to stop writing.

It seems that each time I write to you it is about some tragedy or another in your family. Your father in law told me that your little son Clarence died from measles this week. Mr Doherty said he was only three. You have lost more children than any mother ever deserves to lose and I grieve as your mother and as Clarence's grandmother. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away – blessed be the name of the Lord.

I do not know much about Cobar, except for its great success as a mining town, but I hope there are services there to assist the women as well as the men, for life in such a place can be hard and I am sorry you are so far away again. When you lived at Kangarooobie, I had hoped you might one day change your mind and want to see your family again. Living at Cobar, that chance decreases I suppose, but it is my constant hope that you will one day contact me again

None of us know the whereabouts of Fanny, or Marion, as she now calls herself. She sent me a letter a few weeks after she had disappeared to tell me that she wanted to keep her baby and that she had found a position in a home where the baby was welcome. That she is alive is all I wanted to know. I do not know if she has been in touch with you but I hope she has.

I understand that Mr Doherty wants no part of this sad affair and wants you to disown your daughter. He has made that much clear, but you cannot cut off your ties with this child any more than you can cut off an arm. She is your flesh as you are my flesh and she is your flesh as much as your little boy who died. Your new religion or situation should not be a barrier to your love as your indifference is not a barrier to mine.

My prayers tonight are for little Clarence and for you. How can one not believe in heaven when that is all the hope it offers the family of a dead child?

Your loving

Mother

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MARION LEATHAM,
PROPRIETRESS.

Bank Street
Molong
1 January 1913

Sir Henry Wrixon
“Raheen”
Kew

Dear Cousin Henry

It is a while since we have seen each other, but a note came across my desk this week that your book, *Jacob Shumate* has been republished in England

as *Edward Fairlie Frankfort; or, Politics Among the People* and that has prompted me to write. For me it is a history of our family and your life but it also speaks to those of us who have come to this country and found much more than gold for riches. It tells of a place where one can succeed purely on merit and tenacity, without needing the trappings of family or title to do it. Do you ever wonder if our parents could foresee what possibilities there would be for their children in this country, before they made that long and dangerous voyage to be here?

I see that our new Federal capital is to be named in March by the wife of the Governor General and I suppose you will be at that ceremony, if your health permits. I cannot for the life of me understand why they would choose a piece of land as flat and uninteresting as the Limestone Plains for such an important place when they have the beautiful vistas of Sydney Harbor or Port Phillip which are much more picturesque, but I suppose like the mother of squabbling children, someone had to compromise and compromise is rarely satisfactory. The land around Cooma and Goulburn should be kept for the prime grazing land it is – politics can be conducted quite easily on arid soil, in fact the amount of useless debate and self-serving talk might well help to condition the soil, much like cow manure on a vegetable garden.

I do quite like Mr. Burley Griffin's designs but I am not sure how practical the layout will be, as it seems one must turn in many circles to get to any destination. I read that some of the curved street frontages are similar to the streets of Bath and I recall father talking of what a beautiful city that is, so perhaps it will also one day be lauded as an architectural masterpiece, but I doubt it.

I know that you have retired from public life, but I also know that you continue to contribute to the papers. I am always inspired by a good piece of writing but I find most letters to the editor lack humour or conviction these days. I cannot see myself retiring as I still have far too much to do, though my bones creak a little more than they did in the past, but I quite like injecting a bit of spice into the editorial from time to time. If you would like to write a letter to the people of this district, I would be happy to publish it in full. Is that enticement enough?

Give my love to Charlotte and tell her I enjoyed her Christmas card with the family photo. It is a little depressing when our children start to look middle aged. Luckily, you and I have kept our good looks and our sense of humour!

I wish you a speedy recovery from your present affliction.

Your loving cousin

Marion



THE HEROIC SCOTT

A heroic band has passed into Eternity, and sincere and world wide is the sympathy expressed at the dismal and awful fate which has overtaken Captain Scott and his party of explorers. Not a single one of the four survives to receive the hard enough earned applause and testimony of their unequalled scientific achievements.

Though he is gone and will not wear on the earth the victor's crown, his name will be handed down to our children, and our children's children as that of one of the bravest of the brave, and another example of the British heroes by whom our Nation has been made great.

Molong Express 22nd February 1913



Bank Street
Molong
10 April 1913

Mrs Charlotte Wrixon
"Raheen"
Kew

My dear Charlotte,

You will have been inundated with letters of condolence on the death of your husband, for he was a man of great stature and foresight and courage.

Sitting here in my office, I cannot believe such a force is gone from the world and I had a letter from him only last week, which was so full of opinions and world affairs and enthusiasm that I wondered why he had ever retired from public office.

We have been writing to each other since we were children, in fact, Henry is my oldest correspondent

He has been saying for some time that Germany will find some means to engage in conflict in Europe and I have been as equally convinced she will not, but only yesterday, news of Prince Wilhelm's book with its pro war advocacy was cited in the London papers and I had to concede that Henry was right again.

You have been married to a great man Charlotte and I suppose you have had to share him many times with politicians and judges and the public who clambered for his time and opinions, when you would have preferred to have him sitting at home by the fire, sharing the stories of the day. I know that you have fielded your fair share of newspaper retorts over the years when Henry tested the waters of public opinion, and you have defended your husband through every trial and every decision he has made.

I loved my cousin dearly and I am so pleased he had you by his side through life. The eulogies in the papers will speak of his fairness and his service to our nation but to me he will always be the serious little boy who strived to do his best and wanted to live in a world where justice prevailed. Henry was always destined for public life but you provided the softness he needed to be a more compassionate judge and an arbiter of humanity.

You will understand that I cannot be there for Henry's funeral, but my thoughts are with you, as are my prayers. We have lost a great man. I have lost a great friend.

With loving sympathy

Marion Leathem



OBITUARY; Mrs. Stanley Lowe.

We regret to have to chronicle the death of Mrs. Maria Leonard Lowe, of Grafton, widow of the late John Stanley Lowe, which occurred at St.Kilda . Private Hospital, Sydney, .on Saturday .last, and of which we were informed by wire on Monday, the cause of death being heart failure.

Mrs Lowe had not been well for some time and she and her sister (Mrs Elworthy) took an extended trip round Sydney, Tasmania and Melbourne, and thence to Wagga and Gundagai to see their relatives. After spending a fortnight in Gundagai they left for Sydney on Monday fortnight, and expected to return home to Grafton this week. On leaving Gundagai Mrs. Lowe said she felt much better, but her heart failed on Saturday, and she died in the above-mentioned institution. Mrs Lowe was a daughter of the late Dr. W. Large, formerly of Tumut, Wagga and Cootamundra

The deceased lady, whose remains were taken to Grafton for burial on Thursday last, was a sister of Mrs. M. Leathem, the Proprietress of this journal

Molong Express May 2 1914



The Wool Clip

Dalgety's Annual Wool Review for Australasia contain an exhaustive summary of everything relative to the past season's clip and marketing of same. The number of sheep estimated to have been shorn was 109,692,264 head including lambs, which produced 7.87lbs per head (including lambs) . A splendid monetary return of 6s4d per head was realised the total wealth produced by the flocks in wool alone being £34,959,463.

Molong Express 25 July 1914



Bank St
Molong
20 July 1914

Mrs James Johnston
"Dilga"
Cumnock

My dear Alice

Charles has just returned with the distressing and surprising news of the arrival of Fanny's son at Dilga. The plight of Fanny and her son and their whereabouts has been on my mind constantly since Fanny ran away and I have written to every orphanage and institution in the state trying to find some news of them, for I did not think Fanny would be able to manage on her own with so small a child when she was little more than a child herself.

Charles said the little fellow arrived on the afternoon coach and walked all the way down that long Dilga driveway on his own, with only a carpet bag in his hand and a note pinned to his shirt. I can only imagine his distress. Charles of course being Charles did not know any of the details of where the child has been or why Fanny has sent him to you in this fashion and I was hoping you might be able to give me some news. He said the note only said that Fanny could not look after him anymore and was returning him to his father. Is that correct? Did the note say where Fanny is for I assume she must have put him on the coach at either Parkes or Bathurst, depending upon where she is staying?

The best course of action of course is to send the child straight to one of the institutions in Sydney or Orange, although Orange may be too close. The King Edward VII home in Auburn might be suitable as it is a protestant organisation. There is a similar institution in Parramatta but as it is a Catholic establishment I feel it would be less appropriate.

Of course you or your husband cannot be seen escorting this child to Sydney so I have requested Charles to take him on the train next week when he travels down on business. He can pick the child up directly from Dilga and travel as his guardian.

In this small community there will be much talk Alice, so all speed is important in removing this child from Dilga. I know you are soft hearted and that your mind will work across all the options for the welfare of the little boy, but it is better for the child to have the perception of being orphaned early and to be with others in the same unfortunate situation than to wear the stigma of illegitimacy which is far more damaging for both you and for he. He is young enough not to remember any of these events this week and the quicker he is sent to Sydney where he can become accustomed to the orphanage, the better. I can only assume that Fanny has decided to marry and the stigma of a woman with a past has forced her to reconsider her rash decision to keep the child in the first place.

Mr Johnston may not like my interference in your current dilemma but it is my experience that he is a sensible man who would not wish to inflict further pain on you by keeping at close hand the evidence of his disloyalty and his unfaithfulness.

I have decided to come and visit you on Monday and stay overnight. I am getting too old to make the return journey in one day with the roads as bad as they are. I am sorry for your trouble. We have been through many trials these past few years, and although this may seem insurmountable at present, I assure you that the benefit of my clear, more rational thinking will assist you in the days ahead. If the child is placed in a good facility you can rest knowing you have done what is best and by the fact that in God's eyes you, at least, have done nothing wrong.

May God give you strength at this time my girl.

Your loving

Mother



Bank Street
Molong
29 July 1914

Mrs Henrietta Elworthy
Villiers Street
Grafton

My dear sister, Henrietta,

I have just returned from a visit to Alice and her husband at Dilga. The road is corrugated beyond any hope of repair and I must admit to being badly shaken up by the two hours in the sulky. I have been opposed to Charles buying a motor car, but I think after today, I would gladly condone any means of transport with rubber wheels.

You will be as surprised as I was, to hear that Alice has adopted a young boy. He is the orphaned child of her husband's cousin from Sydney, and there are it seems no other relatives to take the child so Alice, with her usual sentimentality has decided that the duty should fall to her. The new member of the family is about four years, goes by the name of Douglas and is the same age as her youngest child Jessie so he will have a ready playmate. He is quite a handsome young child and the Johnston family likeness is strong. He is very shy and seems a little slow, but I am sure that Alice will bring him around.

I must admit I thought Alice too old to be taking on such responsibility. She is now forty-seven and she has not been strong since the birth of Jessie but her sense of duty and family loyalty has always been one of her strongest assets.

How long since I have seen you dear sister? Visits to my children and their children always put me in mind of our own childhood at Tumut when the town was new and father and mother were so respected in their own ways. Because we grew up without the benefit of grandparents living in this country our family became a unit of its own with such close ties between us all that distance and time do not seem of consequence. I will always think of the nights we crept into that big feather bed with the hollow in the middle and spent hours talking before mother would come in with her candle and threaten to scold us if we did not go to sleep.

We always talked of Ireland as home, but with this war looming so strongly in Europe, I have realised that Australia is home and that Ireland is the land of my ancestors. I had always thought I would travel back to Ireland one day, but I doubt now I ever will, so Ireland will forever remain the green fields and colourful characters of father's fireside tales.

The telegraphic intelligence each day speaks too clearly of what is to come and I wonder how widely the net of war will fall. Austria-Hungary, The Baltic

States, Russia, France, Germany and England will all be drawn in and of course that means all the colonies must step forward. No quick outcome can be expected of a conflict for which Germany has been preparing for so long and the information coming in becomes more and more grim.

I have never shirked from the truth, but at the moment I wish this were just a bad dream from which I will awaken. The reality is though, that the small day-to-day domestic tragedies are small compared to a world which is overheated, with hate and weapons.

So, we will gird up our loins and go to battle if that is what is ordained, but I hope with all my heart that some solution will be found and war will be averted.

I know we are all now busy with our families but I am always heartened by the sight of your handwriting on a letter, so please do not forget that you and Maria Leonard have,

a loving and devoted sister.

Marion



A magnificent flight from Melbourne to Sydney was made by M. Guillaux, the French aviator, whose machine covered the distance of 582 miles in 9 hours 15 mins. Up in the clouds above the mountains he passed through terrific storms in safety. Guillaux says he can fly from Melbourne to Sydney in four hours without stops.

Molong Express July 25 1914



Bank Street
Molong
3 August 1914

Mrs James Johnston
"Dilga"
Cumnock

My dear Alice

I have had a letter last week, from Fanny, or Marion, as she prefers to call herself, asking if she could visit.

She has been working in various places in Sydney since she left Parkes. Her employment was hampered by the baby and she was only able to get ill paying work in boarding houses and similar where she could have room and board for herself and the child. She has been supplementing her income with sewing and although she has not told me all her troubles, her time has not been easy.

She told me that Douglas became ill and she was unable to afford the medicine the doctor prescribed which would make him better and that is when she decided that he would be better off in a home where there were funds available for his upkeep.

Her decision to send Douglas to you was not taken lightly. She misses the child of course, but has vowed he is better off in a home where the stigma of his birth can be hidden behind a mantle of some respectability. She was worried that you would not take him in but I have assured her he is treated well and equally with your own children.

Alice, she is in a terrible situation and is so sickly and thin as to be almost transparent. She approached her mother for aid but has had no reply so I assume Nellie has not changed her mind about her family. I have asked Fanny to come and live with me and she has accepted.

I understand this will create some difficulty for you and will exclude Mr Johnston from ever visiting here, and of course young Douglas would recognise his mother and that is not to be considered, but I believe that I owe Fanny a home at the very least. Through all her troubles she has retained

her dignity and manners and she has a level of common sense well beyond her years. We cannot change the past but we can make amends. I do not want another rift in my family and I would be heartbroken if this decision caused an estrangement between you and me, so I ask for your compassion and understanding.

I will not rest until I have your reply that you understand my predicament, Alice. I thought at this stage of my life that I would be master all of my decisions, but it seems that is not to be the case. I have to keep trusting that God knows what he is about and I feel a sense of responsibility towards her, as my own actions were responsible for putting her in the clutches of Mr Johnston.

And Alice, I love her. She is my first grandchild, the only connection to the daughter I lost and the sweet and loving child who looked to me for care and respect. I let her down once before. I will not do that again. So I have already told her she may stay and she and I will work out some story for her absence and her appearance, for she has aged ten years since we last saw her. I owe her a home and a life.

I love you and pray that you understand

Mother.



Louisa Alice Marion Phillips (Fanny) 1895-1971
Nellie's eldest daughter and Marion's first grandchild

Bank Street
Molong
18 October 1914

Mr John Leathem
27 A Selwyn Street
Paddington

Dear John

Even though we have not spoken these many years since you left Molong, I was saddened to hear of your illness and thought perhaps enough time has passed to heal the wounds we both suffered when Henry died so unexpectedly and our lives changed forever.

I think at the time we were both so badly distressed by his passing and so overwhelmed at the task ahead of us, that we did not stop to consider that we had each just lost the person we loved and the hostility we directed at each other was both anger at Henry for leaving us and a terrible sadness that we did not allow ourselves to address. Rather than support each other and accept that we were grieving, we chose instead to blame each other for every problem and setback, neither seeing nor accepting that these were the normal problems of a paper which had just lost its founder, and the normal behaviour of a grieving family.

As well John, I suffer greatly from a sense of pride, which has often left me worse off than I intend. I knew people were waiting for me to pack up and go back to my parents in Tumut, but that seemed like admitting defeat and I would rather have starved to death in Molong than retrace the steps back to my family, which would confirm the town's opinion. Henry's death was defeat enough, I would not add to my injured pride by admitting I could not look after myself and my children, so I had no choice but to make the paper work at any cost and I'm afraid that any opinion you voiced, no matter how well meant, numbered you in the ranks of those who were waiting for me to fail. And I was not prepared to fail. Every penny we had was in The Express and it was my only lifeline to a future that would not be spent in the poorhouse.

My fear of humiliation and poverty became my catalyst for immersing myself so strongly in the paper and I was annoyed when the businessmen of the town would approach you with their enquiries when they knew that I had taken over the role of the business accounts. It was and still is a small country town mentality to believe that no woman is capable of an astute business decision and after Henry's death, I took that as a personal affront and challenge to my abilities as a woman in general.

As well, I missed Henry so badly that I needed an outlet for all the emotion I dared not show in front of the children. I modelled my mother and her attitude of always making the best of the situation and although I know I was seen as a hard and callous woman who did not grieve properly and show her

husband the respect he deserved, I preferred that to the label of a weak female who had been made inept by widowhood.

I am not sure why I feel it necessary to tell you all this now, thirty years later. I do not think I wish to justify my actions, for I would do it all again and more if required if it meant success for the paper and independence for me, but perhaps age has made me regret some of my decisions and I want you to know that I was driven by my own motives rather than any vindictive intent towards you.

I am extremely proud of what the Express has become and I know you will acknowledge my part in its continuance after Henry died, but I do sorrowfully regret the consequences of the actions whereby you and your family have been virtual strangers to me and my children ever since.

It is a fact that age brings wisdom but in my case it has also brought some humility I suppose. Through various third parties, I have kept abreast of your life and your children and was deeply saddened at the death of your son. To lose a child is a terrible thing. He was a lovely young man and my children loved him very much.

When I heard of your illness I decided to write this letter, which I have been drafting in my head for many years. Pride is a misguided emotion and its cost is high. I hope you will accept this letter as an offer of friendship and an acknowledgment of ill formed decisions made under pressure, in a tragic situation.

I wish you a speedy recovery dear John and please remember me to Marian and the children. We speak of you often and I know that Charles and Frederick called in to see you when they were last in Sydney. They said you reminded them of their father and told them stories from your childhood, which they would not have known otherwise. Thank you for giving them a connection with the father they lost too soon.

If I hear from you I will be grateful that you have received this letter in the manner it was written and if I do not, I hope that in your heart you hold no further ill will against

Your sister in law

Marion Leathem



Dilga
January 15 1915

Mr Charles Leathem
Molong Express
Molong

My dear Charles,

I will be travelling home on Thursday but wanted to make you aware that your uncle, John Leathem died in Sydney on the 13th January.

Although I had not seen him for many years we had re-established communication recently and I feel saddened at his death. He and your father were the best of friends and it was John who convinced Henry to open the Express.

It would be good if you could include the attached obituary to this week's addition. I have written it myself so it does not need editing and I would like it included in full on the second page. We do not need to border the paper in black, but I would like the obituary to be prominent.

Alice is much recovered after her illness, but is grateful for my presence and I am enjoying the children. Little Jeanne is an earnest child, always busy, and takes care of the younger children. Rix is spoilt and out of hand but his father seems to enjoy his antics, much to the distress of Alice, and Jessie and Doug are an inseparable pair. Doug seems to have lost some of his wistfulness and is a sweet and engaging boy. He calls Alice mother and comes to her room with posies from the garden or fruit from the orchard and when I brought Alice her tray this morning, he was brushing her hair. He lets Jessie take control of all their games and activities, which she does with great enthusiasm. Her exuberance is exhausting but there is something delightful about her personality. I wish I were able to see them more often for they grow so quickly.

Please tell Marion that I have invited Canon and Mrs. Alldis for tea on Friday. Ask her to kill a chicken and roast it so we can have it cold, and I hope she will make one of her orange frosted cakes, for her cooking far surpasses

mine, but, no doubt she has been spoiling you with all your favourite food in my absence.

I will be home in time to go through the proofs.

With love

Mother.



Bank Street
Molong
5th July 1915

Mr Ernest and Mr Harold Elworthy
Main Street
Grafton

My dear Ernest and Harold

When the cable came today telling me of my dear Henrietta's death, I became quite distressed and had to retire to my room, but even now, though it is close to midnight, I still cannot believe that my vibrant and charming little sister has departed this life.

Dear Henrietta was my soul mate I suppose for even though she was six years my junior, we, more than any of our other siblings, shared a common tragedy in the loss of our husbands early on in our lives. The letters we wrote to each other sustained us in a way that no other communication could, for we were both women alone in the world, she with you and I with my brood. Your parents and I shared so much time together when we lived in Tumut that we were almost one family. It seems almost prophetic that our families have travelled similar paths and shared similar fates.

Being the wife of a newspaper man Henrietta understood the long hours and the need to be at work even when at a social gathering and when Henry died and I took over the Express on my own, it was her words which often sustained me when I felt a need to admit defeat. Although she was not involved in the Gundagai Times except as a support to your father, she

understood more clearly than most the determination and thick skin required to survive as the purveyor of bad news and grim stories.

I am sorry that I am unable to travel up to Grafton to be with you at this time and I would like you to know that I mourn Henrietta's passing very deeply. I will say a prayer for you tonight and will be with you in spirit tomorrow as you lay her to rest beside her daughter.

Her death is a tragedy and I am grieved that I was not there to comfort her, nor spend more time with her in our twilight years. All my adult life, distance and duty has kept me from bestowing the time I want to on those who really mean so much to me. I hope that The Express is worth all I have sacrificed to make it a success and I hope that when my time comes, as it inevitably will, my family and God will understand as well.

Please make sure you keep yellow roses on her grave. Henrietta loved yellow roses and I am not sure Maria Leonard and Cecelia know that. I am including some notes about her early life, which you may like to include in her eulogy, as Henrietta never courted fame and most of her actions and accomplishments are unknown.

With so much conflict and sadness in the world with this terrible war raging around us where we are told to keep a stiff upper lip, there is sweet release in shedding tears for such a beautiful soul as your mother. I will miss her terribly.

Your loving aunt

Marion Leathem



Bank Street
Molong
15 August 1915

Smedley and Payton Solicitors
Summer Street
Orange

Dear Mr Smedley

I would like to make some amendments to my will at your earliest convenience to reflect my current situation. Quite a lot of changes have taken place in my family, and I am reminded more often that I wish that any time remaining to me is limited and that death can occur without warning.

I am attaching a list of items I would like to include, most of them relating to The Molong Express but there are several personal bequests I would like to have included.

At the time I last made my will, I had chosen my son in law James Johnston as executor as I felt his judgment would be more impartial than my own sons in light of the grief they would no doubt feel at my passing, but I now believe that even that link is too close for good reason to prevail. I would therefore like to investigate if you would be prepared to be my executor.

The Molong Express will be equally inherited by my four sons, with a provision that allows for the sale of their share only to another brother, for a period of three years after my death. My intent is that with three years of adjustment, any disagreements on how the paper should run will be amicably resolved or at least resolved to a point where a sale can be orderly.

My eldest daughter Alice Vale Johnston should inherit an amount equivalent to a fifth share in The Express. My youngest daughter Helen Isabel Doherty should inherit a nominal sum of twenty pounds, conditional on her providing a certificate of marriage for your scrutiny, and the balance of her share should go to her daughter Louisa Alice Marion Phillips, who resides at my address.

In addition, there are some additional bequests to specific people. You will note their names in the attached list.

Would you please be able to give this your consideration and have a draft ready for my perusal by Thursday the 4th October when I will be in Orange on business?

I noticed in the Orange paper that your son enlisted last week and has shipped to Victoria barracks for training. You must be very proud, and I hope for the sake of you and your wife that this conflict will be over sooner than the papers predict.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marion Leathem



Bank Street
Molong
October 30 1915

Mrs. James Johnson
"Dilga"
Via Cumnock

My Dear Alice

We're just dispatched this week's paper, a bigger edition than usual due to all this talk of war and of course we have had "Hitchen's Own" through Molong this week on what the Sydney papers are calling the "Coo-ee March".

They were a well turned out troop of men and were entertained and fed by the ladies of this town, which had more to do with their handsome faces and jaunty outfits than any newfound patriotic conscience on the part of our local lasses. It is interesting that these men would be unknown if it were not for the newspapers, who have turned their recruitment campaign into a festive event in each town. Several local lads will leave with them tomorrow, inspired by the patriotic speeches and a misplaced sense of duty when all they are seeking is a little adventure away from the daily routine of harvest.

Mr Hitchens is hoping to march into Sydney with one thousand men and after the terrible defeat in Gallipoli, we need a boost to morale, so perhaps he will succeed. You might enjoy our account of it in the enclosed Express.

Grandfather Wrixon fought with Wellington and although I do not recall him, he shone brightly in my mother's memory, and my own father fought in the Spanish Legion in Portugal. It seems that no generation can be free of a European conflict, and it seems this war will draw our boys again onto those self same battlefields.

I had a letter from Henry Wrixon's widow Charlotte today confirming their eldest son, Arthur has joined up although he is nearly forty. Her younger

son, John, joined up with Britain almost at the start, as he was living in England when war was declared. Despite the ambivalence of her words, I felt the undertones of her worry. Although John is a capable public servant, he has been softened by his father's connections and money and I wonder at the wisdom of a man of his age fighting in open fields and against an enemy made up of younger men. Perhaps he is still trying to prove his worth to his father, despite his father's death.

But Charlotte Wrixon's worry is real for this war is not a mere day away across the channel but eight weeks away by ship, with news even further delayed as it will be by the prioritisation of the mail. She has decided to move to London to live and take her daughter with her, she says to let her know another life, but rest assured, what she is really doing is going to London to be closer to her sons, should they need her.

I'm pleased that I have no sons of an age anxious to taste the false adventures of war, unpatriotic though that may seem, but I read in Charlotte's words my own dread for my grandsons. William says that Wally is all fired up with the adventure and romance and the call for good horsemen and bushmen. While he is under twenty-one he must abide by his father's wishes, but William says how can he not have the courage to give permission when his son has the courage to go. I fear a war for which Germany has been preparing for so long will not be so easily won and I see long years of despair ahead for the mothers of this country.

Ordinarily I love the news, the telegraphic communications are so full of stories which make me feel closer to the rest of the world, but in a little community such as Molong, I fear in advance the names I must report as killed or missing in action. During the Boer War, I had to list the names of three local boys who were killed in the conflict on one day. Although I do not shirk the duty of this burden, I regret deeply the mothers, having already received this dire news by telegraph, being subjected again to seeing the names of their sons on the front page of the paper, bordered in black.

I report the births, the baptisms and the marriages with no qualms, the death of the elders in the community is accepted, but to see the names of the young men who have sat across from me in church or recited at the local concerts, listed in dispatches makes me live again the death of all those who have been dear to me and who have passed away and I wonder at my own life. Even though questioning the will of the Almighty has never been a failing of mine, I must admit more and more these days to pondering the bigger questions.

I must keep the paper patriotic at all costs and indeed your brothers seem keen to forecast the war news with as much detail and listing of casualties as possible, but perhaps now that I am past my allotted span, I am conscious of what a precious gift life is and I hate to see it frittered away on foreign battle fields. It would not do to let the men hear me talk like this so perhaps you would be kind enough to keep this letter from your husband as I know his feelings on Germany and the need to defeat them at all cost.

I trust that you are all well. I wish I saw you and the children more often but I understand the difficulty of that now that young Marion lives with me (how difficult it is to not call her Fanny). She does not ask anymore of Doug's welfare but I know he is constantly on her mind and I think if she were to see him, it would make for an impossible situation. She is a great comfort to me and I hope that she might one day meet a good man who will give her some happiness and peace of mind, but I understand her hesitation and of course with so many men going to war, times are more difficult for the young.

Perhaps you could bring the children in on Saturday for dinner, as Marion is staying overnight in Manildra with friends. I will ask all the grandchildren to come for tea so that you may see them. It breaks my heart that my family cannot gather together without plotting and planning, but perhaps one day we can all be together without this guile. I assume Mr Johnston will be occupied with farm work and unable to attend.

Your most loving

Mother



The Misses Dunn had an exciting experience on Monday night. Soon after 11 o'clock, while asleep in bed at their home above Smart's store, a revolver bullet whizzed through the door, and, striking the wall, fell on Ruby's shoulder but without inflicting injury. The origin of the affair is a mystery, but it is thought that someone had sinister designs on a cat or other nocturnal prowler, and missed.

Molong Express 30 October 1915



Bank Street
Molong
25 May 1916

Corporal Wallace Leathem
1st Battalion
Victoria Barracks
Sydney

My dearest Wallace

We were all hoping you would get leave before you were sent overseas but I understand that the AIF has decided their need is greater than ours and your ship departs this week. I only hope that this parcel catches you before you sail.

Marion and I have been making all sorts of cakes and biscuits for you, as I understand from your mother that war rations and army cooking leave a lot to be desired, but I am not sure what state these will be in when you receive them. In addition, Marion has made you some woollen undershirts and socks, which may help keep you warm in the field and there are some other small bits and pieces, which you may find useful.

I am sending you this week's copy of The Express and you will see your name in our patriotic column, along with some other local boys of your acquaintance. I am hoping this war will not last for very long, but until you return I will make sure you get a copy of the paper sent to you every week, so that you may keep up with the local news. Your father thinks this foolish, but I thought it may help you to keep things in perspective if you know that we at home are all supporting you and waiting for your safe return.

I am terribly proud of you Wally for enlisting, although of course I wish you did not have to go. You are a first class horseman and an excellent bushman but I have known you to take some terrible risks in the name of adventure. I hope that you will do your very best to not take those same risks in France. A cool head and reasoned thinking is the best defence against the Kaiser's men and will do more good than rash acts of bravery.

Please guard your own life with the same vigilance you would guard others and come home safe and well.

I love you dear boy and I ask God daily to watch over you and keep you and will continue to do so every day of my life. Please write whenever you can so that we know all is well.

How can this campaign possibly fail when your comrades, like you, are prepared to fight for what is right?

Till we meet again, dear Wally

All my love

Grandmother.



Bank Street
Molong
14 June 1916

Mrs Charlotte Wrixon
12 Cadogan Place
Chelsea
London

Dear Charlotte

I have seen in despatches today the name of Arthur Henry Wrixon and felt I must write. I thought the endless names of the casualties at the Somme and the endless anguish of mothers since this war started should have made me immune to the shock of seeing yet another name of a boy I know, gone forever, but it has not.

As a parent, you have every right to think that once a child reaches adulthood, he is safe from the depredations of occasional fate, but who could have foreseen this terrible war and all that it asks of our young men. You must be so proud and yet so sad to have this terrible loss of your eldest child, so soon after the death of his father. I can only imagine your grief and

your mixed emotions at this but by the time this letter reaches you, probably eight weeks with the war postal service, I hope that some of that grief has lessened and that you can come to terms with your son's bravery.

When you moved to London, I knew it was to be near your children and to share again the family connections you missed when your husband's commitments kept you both in Melbourne. I did not believe when I heard you were leaving Melbourne that you would really stay for very long, but I see now how children and grandchildren are great reasons for redirecting the events of our lives and you will want to spend more time with Arthur's children and your daughter.

I suppose that there is no real comparison but I would hope that the proximity you have to France would mean that you at least have regular contact with your remaining son and your nephews who are fighting in this terrible conflict.

The local boys who have gone to war are so far away from the bosom of their families that they may as well be on another planet and my eldest grandson Wally, left last week for France. He is only eighteen and a shy country boy but patriotism burns inside him as an ember and he would not let his father rest until he had given him permission to enlist. Waiting for news from the front fills us with dread and I do not think any of us will ever sleep well again while our boys are on ships or on distant battlefield, and now our Prime Minister Mr Hughes is suggesting conscription as the only means of supplying enough men to feed the army's needs. When the referendum on conscription is held later this year, I do not honestly know how I will vote. In the paper I need to be patriotic and I understand the need to defeat Germany, but at what cost, only mothers like you will know. In Flanders Field is more than a patriotic poem for too many.

Dear Charlotte, I grieve with you tonight though I do it many miles away. Whilst ever men such as the Kaiser control the armies, the rest of us will dance to their music and I pray daily for Kitchener and his generals and for General Blamey who after all might help us have a voice in all this conflict.

May God help you understand this loss, for I cannot.

With deepest sympathy and love

Marion Leathem



The Molong Express
Bank Street
21 July 1916

Mr Frederick Williams
Great Western Hotel
Molong

Dear Mr Williams

I do not wish to embarrass you by printing your letter and this reply in the Express so I thought I would do you the courtesy of writing to you personally, as we have known each other for a long time.

I understand that you have an objection to six o'clock closing and that you believe it will affect your income, but I really think that we have far greater concerns to worry about than letting men consume alcohol until ten o'clock at night.

For too long we have seen the weaker members of our community drunk and disorderly whilst their wives and children wait alone at home and often go without decent food and clothing so the head of the family can get drunk.

I am not opposed to liquor, and often have a sherry before dinner, but I am opposed to the swill trough mentality of the average drinking man. As most are not able to impose any limitations on themselves, the government has seen fit to do it and I heartily applaud Mr Hughes and his government for imposing this law.

Our boys at the front have far greater restrictions than this and I believe it does not hurt those men who stay behind to have what, in comparison to our soldiers, is a minor inconvenience.

I am sure you will agree with this position when you have had time to consider it from a different perspective and we need say no more about this issue in the Express.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Marion Leathem



Molong
16 September 1916

Mrs J Johnston
Dilga
Cumnock

My dear Alice

Your letter arrived this morning and I passed it with trepidation to Marion, but she recognised your handwriting and opened it at once.

I am sure she will write to you separately but she has agreed to sing at the Concert for the Belgians you have organised next week and will sing, "Your King and Country Needs You" and has arranged for Miss Lowe to accompany her.

I am so proud of her for rising to the occasion and I am so proud of you for your tact. I hope this might mean a bridging of the differences which have occurred, and I will accompany Marion to the concert, even though I rarely go out at night any more. We will stay at the hotel in Cumnock overnight so please arrange a room for us and perhaps you would like to come in to dine with us and bring Jeanne and Wrix with you, as they are to recite on the night. You will understand your husband must not attend.

I look forward to sharing an evening with you both and seeing all of you perform on the night. Perhaps it takes more catastrophic issues than our own small family tragedies to bring us together. I cannot say I am happy in any way about the war, but it does give us a perspective to perhaps generate a place of some reconciliation.

I look forward to seeing you and the children

With love

Mother



Bank Street
Molong
18 December 1916

Mrs Cecelia Williamson
Harrow Road
Forbes

My dearest Cecilia

How happy I am that you have moved so much closer to Molong. With the rail line now complete, I hope that we can spend more time in each other's company without the arduous journeys of before. We reported today in the Express on the scientific advances in aircraft flight and their use in the battle against Germany. I suppose if we can be thankful for anything to do with this terrible conflict it is the advancement made in all forms of transport, although I cannot imagine what type of clear head one must possess to fly an airplane and shoot at the enemy all without fear of falling from the sky. I don't think you will see me in such a vehicle any time soon, but I said the same about the motor car and I find them a very comfortable mode of transport.

I was secretly pleased Mr Hughes' plebiscite on conscription was defeated although for the sake of the appearances, I had to pretend otherwise in the paper. There have been some violent acts against people who are seen as unpatriotic in the district and Frederick was the recipient of a white feather the other day, though he is nearly forty. I do not pretend to be pleased that my sons are too old for this war when in fact, if Mr Hughes had his way all men up to the age of forty four would be eligible for service, but I do not see how they intend to send five thousand or more troops each month if the country will not agree to conscription.

If the battle at Fromelles and the carnage at Gallipoli are an indication of the advances of modern war and weapons, I believe we need to reconsider the way in which men fight war. Lord Kitchener is too quick to sacrifice the colonial forces in conflicts which have little chance of success, and our generals have little option but to obey, no matter what they truly believe.

But I must stand down from my soapbox. There seems little conversation these days which does not revolve around the actions of our troops. We have all become amateur commanders and each week our editorial discusses the campaigns and the success and the failures as if what we think had any impact on our leaders. But with so many of our young men at the front in this brutally cold French winter, I hope they might be gladdened that their efforts are not going unnoticed by those they left at home.

Mr Jesson our Editor of the past two years has joined up and we had a presentation for him at the vicarage last night. He is such a quiet man, I do not know how he will fare in the trenches, but Marion knitted him balaclavas and socks and gloves and The Express bought him a luminous wristlet watch which may be of some use in the months to come.

Our Smokes for Soldiers campaign is very successful and we have raised over forty pounds for the cause. I do not generally agree with tobacco habits but if they give some comfort to our boys, I will do my part. It is amazing to think how war has changed my opinions and loosened my values on issues I once thought so important. I do not think any of us will be the same when this war finally ends.

Perhaps you might come and stay over Christmas. The children and their families will all be here with the exception of Alice who has commitments at Dilga and Nellie who has moved to Cobar. Marion wanted to cook geese this year and is planning a lavish lunch, so there will be plenty to go around if your son and his family would like to join us, though I doubt any of us will enjoy Christmas when we know what our boys are enduring at the front.

I hope to see you but if not, please know that you are in the loving thoughts of

Your sister

Marion



MOLONG
18 APRIL 1917

MR JOHN LEATHEM
HOTEL AUSTRALIA
SYDNEY

JOHN STOP MYRA GRAVELY ILL STOP RETURN MOLONG AT ONCE
STOP LOVE MOTHER STOP



Bank Street
Molong
19 April 1917

Mrs James Johnston
"Dilga"
Cumnock

Dearest Alice

I know this will be a terrible shock, but John's daughter Myra died this morning from meningitis. John was in Sydney but managed to get back by train this morning so was able to say goodbye. It is a terrible tragedy for the wee child had just turned eight the week before and had been perfectly well until Tuesday.

With all the bad news from the Western Front, we tend to become complacent about the death of our soldiers until something like this, closer to home, makes us realise that mothers of so many boys at the front hear this type of news every day.

The funeral is on Saturday at 10am. I am sure Mr Johnston will stay with the children while you attend and Charles will drive you back to Dilga on Sunday after church.

With love

Mother



Molong
26 January 1918

Mrs Julia Ratliff
Tumut

My dear Julia

Thank you for your letter and card which I passed on to William and his wife Emily. Although the despatches said Wally was missing in action, he was apparently wounded and is now in an army hospital in England. Although wounding is not generally good news, it is better than missing or dead so I found myself thanking God for his shell wound until I realised the irony of that sort of prayer and went out to put manure on the roses.

How this war drags on and how tired I am of feigned optimism. It seems everyone walks around with a false smile, finding hope in the most mundane news from the front. It is almost as if it is unpatriotic to be miserable that this war has continued into another year, but I too am guilty of this action. It seems pathetic to complain about our own plight when our boys are suffering so much but I wonder how much longer we can all go on when our emotions are stretched taut across the barbed wire of France and Germany that protects our boys from the enemy.

When I think of our youth in Tumut, it was a very simple affair in comparison to the girls of today. Marion sits nightly knitting socks and attending patriotic concerts and Red Cross meetings and every day another young man of her acquaintance joins up or is killed or wounded or worse, simply goes missing. Every gathering is a mixture of women of every age but the only males who attend are middle aged or children. Any young man of an eligible age who is not in uniform is looked upon as a slacker and stays away from any gathering and every mother with a son at the front smiles more brightly and

is more animated than those who do not, pretending, pretending, pretending that all will be well.

And those who do return, with missing limbs or eyes or that terrible shell shocked stare, all look as if something of their soul has died. None seem to talk of the horrors they have seen, it is as if they wish to simply forget what has been. The main toll of this war is the terrible misery it has inflicted on the world. I wonder when it is over, and I persist in saying when rather than if, will anything ever be the same as before?

I must finish before this turns into a dirge but sometimes it is hard to keep the faith.

With love

Marion



Signaller W. H. Leathem, in a letter to his cousin, Miss Marion Phillips, of Dilga, written from France on Xmas Eve, says:

Here I am again and it's Xmas although lots of things have happened since last Xmas it does not seem quite twelve months ago.

Our brigade is in the line again and I am writing this in a comfortable little dug out-comfortable because we have a fire, and I am smoking a nice cigar. We are most decidedly comfortable at times.

Have not received any Xmas parcels so far; I expect the mail is so heavy that they cannot deal with it all.

I received a parcel from Dilga while we were out resting a few weeks ago, needless to say the contents were soon devoured and enjoyed by yours truly and his pals.

Everything is quiet to-night, hardly any guns going at all, so I guess the Huns, as well as our boys recognize that; this is hardly a time to make things willing.

I've been wondering to-night what I would be doing; if I was back in dear old "Aussie" again.

Anyhow, we intend having a real good time to-morrow and make it seem as much like Xmas 'as we possibly can under the circumstances.

We have arranged with the cooks to have a decent dinner and I am sure we will all have a gay old time.

Outside it is snowing a treat so tomorrow we will have, as per usual, the snow-clad landscape, such as they have in Blighty, but the surroundings of course, will not be so bright.

Have just heard that the whole of our Xmas mail has been sunk-very cheerful news at this stage-enough to give a fellow the blues.

It's no use grumbling about it, it's the war.

Will have to close now, hope you have a Merry Xmas at Dilga, I suppose all the people from home will be out to spend Xmas at Dilga, so I guess you will have a good time. I can assure you that my thoughts will be with you all to-morrow.

Molong Express 13 April 1918



Bank Street
Molong
29 June 1918

Mrs Thomas Doherty
Welcome Street
Millthorpe

My dear Nellie

I have written letters to you before which you choose to ignore, so I see no reason why this attempt will be any different, but I am nothing if not an optimist.

I was thinking this morning today is your 43rd birthday. When I last saw you, you were only twenty-five years old. I cannot image you as middle aged, but then I cannot image myself as seventy-six. I wonder at the years which have passed and all that has happened, without you and I ever seeing each other at all, though you now live only a short distance away.

I have stopped thinking that I will see you before I die, not that I intend dying any time soon, but recent events have shown that age is no indicator of longevity and I suppose I have to be realistic. I often think we might meet accidentally on the street or in a store, and it troubles me that I may not now recognise you, though I am sure you would recognise me, for I have not changed all that much.

I am sure you will be aware that Fanny, or as she calls herself these days, Marion, lives with me now. I think of her still as a child but she is now twenty-three and a competent young woman. She is nearly the age you were when we parted company and I think she looks a lot like you. She has endured a lot for one so young, but that is her story and she will or will not choose to tell you if and when she ever sees you again. I hope you will see her though, for you would be very proud of all that she is.

You and I have been distanced by my actions. I have written before that I regret this profoundly and would do anything to reverse time and act differently. Marion however has been alienated from you through no fault of her own and I suppose I must ultimately bear responsibility for that too, as it was I who decided she should not live with you. If I had known the far reaching consequences of standing by my moral beliefs, I may well have decided on a different course.

I have not told Fanny, how that name persists, my part in our estrangement, deeming her too young to know such stories, and I wanted you to know that. However, as I grow older, it seems unfair for her to not know the reason her mother has not spoken to her all these years and I feel I should set the record straight, although I suppose I risk losing her as well as you with that information.

I wanted to let you know the truth as it stands today, hoping I suppose that you may seize the untruths and use them to reunite with a daughter who has never really had a mother or father in her life. My fervent wish would also be for you and I to meet again, if not as friends perhaps as a curiosity to each other.

I do not say that I have been responsible for all the ills of our lives, but a long time ago, I set in action a chain of events which have caused each of us to live in isolation and regret. I thought, as I got older I would learn to accept my failings but they seem instead to gather together in a band. On their own, each is not such a tragedy but as a whole there is more sadness than Shakespeare could ever put into one of his works.

I do not know how to apologise to you in such a way that you can accept. I do not seek to gain peace of mind by acting contritely for all my wrongs, that is not my motive. When I finally meet God, we will have many issues to discuss and one of them will be my treatment of you. I do not believe, as I used, that he is a pious God. I think now, as I get older that he will understand the failings of mortals in their bid to do what they think is right. My major failing, as I look back on my life, is that I wanted so much to get things right, that I did not always see the consequences of that pursuit. Perhaps we may all be in a better position if I had in fact done more things 'wrong'.

But self-examination is not the reason for this letter. I do that enough in my own time. This letter is to let you know that I want to set the record straight for Marion before I die. I would prefer you to do this, but if you choose not, then I see no alternative for she should know the truth. She will judge me or she will not, but I hope, now that she is older that she will understand and she deserves some explanation.

I hear that you have a new baby daughter and I am sure she will bring you great joy. I often wonder about Dorrie. She would have reached her majority now and I suspect she is a great beauty for she was a beautiful baby. I hope that you will remember me to her.

I want you to know that I have always loved you Nellie. There is no regret for me greater than losing you. I hope that your life has been happy despite the many tragedies you have suffered with your children, and I hope that Mr Doherty has been the partner you always wanted.

Your brothers and sister have had no part in my actions so I would ask that you do not blame them for my errors. I keep you in my prayers every night and hope that you will all be re-united.

Perhaps one day you may wish to say a prayer for me as well, I would like that.

Goodbye Nellie. I wish you a happy and long life.

With heartfelt love

Mother



**Helen Isabelle Leathem Phillips Doherty –
undated**

**A photograph sent to her daughter Louisa
Alice Marion Phillips (Fanny)**

**Inscribed “To Marion with love from her
mother”**



Writing home from Palestine on October 16, Sapper C. F. Fitzpatrick, son of Mr. F. A. Fitzpatrick, once of Molong and now of Wingham, says - Met Jack Frogley from Manildra here the other day. As luck would have it, I had just received from you a copy of the "Molong Express" along with the Manning papers, and I passed it on to Frogley. Naturally, he was pleased to get it. You want to be thousands of miles from home to fairly estimate the value of your own home-town paper....Remember me to friends - and I wish one and all a happy Xmas. It will, however, have a big tinge of sadness for many. I hope to be home long before next Xmas comes.

Molong Express 21 December 1918

THE MOLONG EXPRESS AND WESTERN DISTRICTS ADVERTISER. MOLONG DISTRICT NEWSPAPER.

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BOX No. 16.

VOL. XXXII.

[ESTABLISHED 1876.]

MOLONG, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1918.

No. 7678.

Wolara Grammar School.
GRANCE (RECRUITING).
Education youth. Extension to female.
Boys prepared for University, Public
Service, Commerce, etc.
Wood-climbing, Station Book-keeping and
Carpentry taught by Experts.
C. R. CAMPBELL, B.A.

THE WHEAT WORRY

It now appears that the rumour that a million tons of Australian wheat were sold about three months ago to Britain at 4s 6 per bushel was not founded in fact—at least, the farmer is told by responsible authorities that it was not. At time of writing it has been established that the wheat was not sold three months ago—that is, if the correspondence between himself and Mr. Hughes which Mr. Watt raised in proof of his denial settles everything bearing on the subject. While Acting Prime Minister Watt was at the time of the pre-supposition of wheat growers in showing perturbation concerning the disposal of their bread and butter, and asserts that no sale has been made, Minister for Agriculture Grubbs asserts just as decisively that the wheat was sold, the British Food Commission having given notice that it wanted to clinch with the offer made three months previously. Mr. Grubbs says that the apparent contradiction between his and Mr. Watt's statements is due to a difference of opinion as to what actually constituted a sale. Who is to be believed, Mr. Watt or Mr. Grubbs, neither of both? Perhaps, before this article goes the light of publication, developments will arise which will settle the matter definitely. It may be that the wheat has not actually been sold, but whether it is in process of being sold, or whether negotiations are about to dispose of it, as mentioned in a recent article

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Right at the Railway Station.

The Best and Leading Brands of Wines and Spirits.

UP-TO-DATE MOTOR GARAGE, FAMILIAR ROOMS AND STABLES.

PORTER MEETS ALL TRAINS.

TOOTH'S NEW T.B. BOTTLED ALE. Recommended by
Connoisseurs. The Best.

GEORGE WILLIS, Proprietor.

Wheat Scrip

—OR—

Certificates of your Wheat.

Highest Prices will be obtained by
Consulting WEISS & CO.
before Selling.

Weiss & Co.,
MOLONG and CUMNOCK.

(PHONE 73)

(PHONE 13)

THE QUALITY SHOP

worth at least 6s, it is time to wonder what sort of business men the Federal Government is comprised of. It is all very well for Mr. Watt to cry, like a small child, that he is "sick and tired" of the way the Government is handled about the matter when it is trying to do the best it can for the farmer. Doubtless Mr. Watt and his associates are doing their best, but in a shabby, apathetic manner. It is a poor best, and the farmer's interests are not being conserved by such efforts. Anyhow, the road to a certain entry of wheat is paved with good intentions.

THE ONE BIG UNION MENACE

If any party were asked to reveal the most serious of the one big Union, which the Trades Hall despise are hatching, the flying of the Red Flag, and the adoption of a resolution expressing brotherhood with Germans and Austrians, in Sydney last week, would establish it. This is the sort of thing which is out to harness the man on the land with demands for constant wages and conditions, with potential boycotts and strikes to follow if the demands are not acceded to. And the One Big Union is surely coming, inaugurated with the greatest fort opposition with which Labor extremists have in the past pursued—and gained—most of their claims. What are the men who are doing in connection with this common enemy? Frantically building. Organization must be combined with organization, strategy with strategy. Just as the Labor Union are amalgamated to form a machine to force their aims, so must the F.S.A., the Farmers' Association, the Primary Producers' Union and other organizations comprised of primary producers, amalgamate to combat their interests against any single movement which

The Molong Express and Western Districts
Advertiser -
Front Page November 30 1918



Riddell Street
Molong
10 February 1919

Master Douglas Johnston
"Dilga"
Cumnock

My dear Douglas

I am writing to you today on your ninth birthday because I believe that is a worthy milestone in the life of a young man and I do think you are a fine young man.

I'm getting too old to come and visit you as often these days. My bones creak all the way in the carriage no matter how mildly your Uncle Charles drives the horses or how many times I tell him to mind the potholes. So because I cannot come and see you today I thought I would write you a letter. I am not sure if you have ever received a letter addressed to you before but a letter is a very important document. It is more than just a piece of paper, it is a personal memento of someone's private and important thoughts. It carries ideas and sentiments which the writer felt were so important that they must be conveyed as quickly and as accurately as possible to the recipient, in this case, you.

That is how I feel about your birthday Douglas, I'm very sorry that I cannot be there to watch you play with your new pony or to have tea with you and your parents and your brother and sisters, but I thought I would very much like to have you know I was thinking about you today and to know I think about you quite often.

When I was your age, I had quite a lot of brothers and sisters but my aunts and uncles and my grandparents were far away across the ocean so I never met them, except for my Uncle Arthur who also moved to Australia, but he lived in Melbourne so we saw him very rarely. Because there was only my father and mother and my brothers and sisters we were all very close and looked out for each other as best we could. I was brought up to believe and I

still believe that your family are the people who really care about you and who will be beside you all the way through your life.

When your mother was a little girl, her father died. He was quite young and we were all very sad. I was sad to lose my husband and the children were sad to lose their father. I decided that it was important for our family to be together and to go on with the life we had been living, even if it meant that we would do that with the most important member missing. So I worked very hard and kept this newspaper operating and did my best to raise the children. I thought I was doing quite a good job but I did not realise that children need much more attention than I could give them and they all grew apart a little. In your life, there are some family whom you have never met.

I was looking for something of worth to send to you for your birthday. Not a toy or a book, for I always send those things and I wanted to send you something more special this time, so in the parcel you have already unwrapped, I am sure, you will find a photo showing a large group of people.

This is more than a photo, it is your history and I want you to have it somewhere close to your bed so that you might see it first thing every morning and last thing every night. I want you to understand that you are connected by blood and most importantly, love, to each one of these people. I had this photo taken a long time ago for I wanted to have a reminder of all my dear children gathered together.

I suppose you wonder why I am sending you this, which is probably of no interest to you a young man of nine. I thought perhaps in the future, when I am no longer around to answer the questions you may want to ask, you may still have, somewhere in a drawer amongst your clothes, this letter which was written when you were nine. I know from experience that we lose a lot of information about our history, simply because we do not know the questions to ask. When we are all going about our business, we forget that the world is a transient place filled with people who will grow old and die or who will move away and be but a memory and that when people die, their memories die with them. I am giving you a little of my memory as a gift.

So young Douglas, have a wonderful birthday and know that I will be thinking of you as you blow out your candles.

Happy birthday

Grandmother Leathem



Family Group – Molong thought to, be around 1917

The Molong Express
Bank Street
Molong
20 May 1919

Mrs James Johnston
“Dilga”
Cumnock

Dear Alice

William has just told me that Wally’s ship arrives in Sydney on the 31st of May, they are travelling down to welcome him home, but they do not expect him to be discharged until August. I had hoped he might be back for my birthday next month.

I only hope that he has come home with his reason, for so many of these poor wretched fellows have not. Now that the war is won, we can really only begin to count the living casualties and wonder at the price of peace. Thank God this war will end all wars for this world must surely learn from this horror and never see the like of this again.

I will close this and sit for a while in the garden, as it is a beautiful day and Marion is making tea. Charles has taken Elsie out to visit her parent's graves. I thought perhaps once Elsie's mother died that she and Charles might finally marry. I reminded Charles this morning that he has been courting that woman for over thirty years. He has made it impossible for her to marry another man as she is known far and wide as his companion, and yet he persists in his practice of indecision. I would not have stood it, but Else is made of less demanding stuff and I do not think Charles has realised yet that he is well past middle age.

My love to you and the children

Mother



The Molong Express
Bank Street
15 July 1919

Mr R. J. Baker
President
NSW Country Press Conference
C/- Gosford Times
Gosford NSW

Dear Mr Baker

In response to your invitation to attend the twentieth annual conference of the NSW Country Press Association, I advise that I will not be attending this year, but will be represented by my son, John Leathem.

I do however have several comments on the proposed agenda and would be grateful if you could consider these as part of the discussions.

In this district, the drought has been devastating and the ongoing decline in advertising since the war has had an impact on both our general printing business as well as our distribution. This has not been helped by the increase in the price of materials and the further increase in wages for casual staff. I propose that a freeze on wages be tabled for all newspaper staff for a period of two years or until the drought officially ends, to bring this situation under control.

I support the proposal for the exchange of confidential reports concerning the qualification of journalists seeking employment. It is not always possible to obtain accurate information about the past performance of a journalist and the cost to bring an employee to country areas is high. Sadly, many journalists excel at creative copy in their resumes but fail to reach the same standard in their reporting of the news.

I congratulate the association on its twentieth anniversary and hope to attend next year. My very best wishes for a successful conference and I hope you will be standing again for the position of President, for I believe you have done an exemplary job and would like to see you continue in the role. If you choose to stand again, please find enclosed my proxy vote supporting you in the position.

Yours very sincerely

(Mrs) Marion Leathem

Proprietress



Main Street Molong – 2007 The Molong Express office is the orange building on the right next door to the Commercial Bank which was founded in 1876 – Photo Diane Murray

Molong
July 18 1919

Mrs Thomas Doherty
Millthorpe

My dear Nellie

I am not sure what prompted you to send a card for my birthday, but once I overcame my initial shock, I was very pleased at your sentiments, though it has taken me a while to work out a response. Of course it would have been pleasant to have a letter as well, but I suppose after twenty years, any communication can be considered as progress.

I am in return sending you a photograph of Marion, which she had taken for my birthday. She is a very lovely young woman and is a great comfort to me these days when your brothers and sister are all busy with their own lives. I

thought you might like to have this, firstly, because it is your daughter, but also because she reminds me a lot of you at her age. I wonder if you can see the likeness?

She has lately been seeing Stanley Woolbank, whom you will not know, but he is Silas's son and recently returned from the war. I am not sure if they will marry – I think Marion could do much better, as young Mr Woolbank thinks a little too well of his looks and is not well acquainted with the concept of hard work, but there are so few young men about since the war, that I suppose the young women must do what they can if they wish to settle down.

I am well, though of course I am old and my joints remind me of that every morning when I rise, but I still manage to command respect in the Express office and even the editor at the Argus now defers to me and wishes me good morning, so there is some advantage in age. I have outlived seven of my siblings, four of them younger than me and many of my contemporaries. I have also outlived four of my grandchildren, which saddens me more than I can say.

William said your new baby daughter is a beauty and that your sons are all strong and well. I saw Dorrie has married George South in Orange last year, though I did not know about it until I saw it in the Orange paper. I doubt she will remember me but I hope you will pass on my congratulations and the regards of her grandmother.

I suppose it is no use asking you to come and visit me? I am well enough now, but at seventy-seven every week is a gift and one never knows what fate will deal us. If you feel you could come, I would very much enjoy seeing you and your children if you wish to bring them. If you are worried about seeing your daughter, I can arrange to meet you alone in Orange. I do not travel as much anymore, but I could come in on the train if it meant seeing you again. We do not have to talk of the past – perhaps it is best we do not, but we can talk of the present. The future does not hold as much promise for me these days so I prefer to make the most of each moment, and in some ways I wish I had lived my entire life in this manner. One can spend far too much time in regrets for what might have been and hopes for what might yet come. In my experience, each is a waste of time. The only certainty is now.

There is too much to say if I continue this letter, so I will save any news for when we meet, hopefully soon, but if that does not happen, know that I was pleased by your gesture. It may not mean much to you being so young, but when there is no expectation in life, the arrival of an unexpected message from one of your children is better than all the king's gold.

My love has always been with you and I wish you nothing but happiness. I hope, when you are my age, you will not have the same distance between your daughter and yourself as you have with me. You have time to make amends with Marion. I hope you might see wisdom before it is too late. I would not want you to have the same regrets as me.

May God bless you and keep you well

Your loving

Mother.



3 August 1919

Dear Charles,

I could not sleep last night, as I have not been feeling very well so came into to do some bookwork, which I would otherwise have done today. I noticed that there is a discrepancy in Mr Taylor's account of sixpence, which should not be there. Would you please contact him and tell him it is still outstanding.

The latest Wimble's order needs to include some of the new advertising typeface for Dalton Bros. I promised them last month that we would procure some new images and we should follow through with that promise. I have made a list for your perusal.

I have also written the editorial as I was looking through the telegraphic intelligence last night and a few items need to be included.

I wonder if you would ask Dr Quinn to come to the house today when he is making calls, as I believe I may have an abscess on my tooth and he will need to remove it.

I will be back at the office tomorrow.

And you need to get Tom to cut some more kindling, I used what was there last night to start a fire, as the office was very cold.

Mother



Marion Wrixon Large Leathem 1840-1919



Death of Mrs Leathem

We regret to announce the death of Mrs. Marion Leathem, Proprietress of the Molong " Express" which took place at the local Hospital at about 1 p.m. on Tuesday, at the advanced age of 77years. The deceased lady, who had been ill about a week, developed an abscess on the throat that grew so rapidly that Drs. Kennedy and Howse decided to operate for its removal. The operation was performed on Thursday of last week, and was apparently successful, the patient being considerably relieved for a time ; but subsequently the abscess took a ,more malignant form. which quickly affected the sufferer's whole system, and bronchial symptoms accentuated the trouble. All that was possible was done to relieve the patient, and a trained nurse was inconstant attention, but she gradually sank, and passed peacefully away, as above stated.

The late Mrs. Leathem was the third daughter of the Dr. Wm.Large, M.R.C.S. (Edin.), and was born at Belfast, Ireland, June 15th, 1842. The family removed to Australia, where the deceased arrived when six months old. They landed in Victoria with the well-known Wrixon family, to whom the deceased was related, Mrs. Large being a daughter of Colonel Wrixon of the Irish Guards, and a cousin of Sir H. Wrixon, an ex-Attorney-General of Victoria. After practising his profession in Victoria for five years, Dr. Large came to the Wagga and Tumut districts. Mrs. Leathem received her education at the Ladies' Seminary, Wagga, and in her young days took a keen interest in Sunday School and Church work, as well as in social matters. Deceased was married to Mr Henry Vale Leathem at All Saints' Church of England, Tumut, by the Rev. J. C. Byng. Mr and Mrs. Leathern resided at Tumut for some years, and then removed to Gundagai, and

subsequently-in 1876-they came to Molong, and started the " Express."

Mr Leathem died of pneumonia on July 9, 1879, leaving his widow with a family of six young children. The deceased lady thus had a difficult and strenuous burden placed upon her shoulders of rearing a family and conducting a newspaper, but she was a woman of indomitable courage and resource, and faced many difficulties and trials which would have broken the heart of many a man let alone a woman. However, she faced her difficulties with determination, aided by hard work and shrewdness, and succeeded in keeping the business going until the sons grew up and were able to assist her. Although not able through infirmities during latter years to take any active part in the management of the paper, her advice was of great advantage to the management. The venerable lady was of a kindly and charitable disposition, and was highly respected by all who knew her. She was a loving and devoted mother, and will be greatly missed by her sons, who have been associated with her in the office all their lives. She took a keen interest in politics, and could put forward her views with lucidity and conciseness.

Two daughters and four sons survive the deceased, viz. :-Mesdames Jas. Johnston (Dilga) and Mrs. Doherty (Millthorpe), and Messrs. Charles," William, John, and Frederick ; also a number of grand-children and one great-grandchild child, Sapper Leathem, who has just returned from the war, is grandson. The deceased was one a family of 12, and the sisters and brothers who survive her are Mesdames W. H. Glover (May), M. W. Bassett (Ascot Vale, near Griffith) and Williamson (Grafton)and Messrs. John Large (Cootamundra) and Thomas.Large (Hay).

The body was removed from the Hospital to St. John's Church on Tuesday afternoon. The funeral took place on Wednesday afternoon, and was preceded by a brief service by the Rev. J. A. Poole in the church, Mrs. Bamford presiding at the organ. The funeral cortege was large and representative, and 'testified to the high esteem in which the fine old lady was held;'-The remains were

interred in the C. of E. section of Molong cemetery..
Rev. J. A. Poole read the burial service. Mrs. Kingsland
conducted the funeral arrangements.

The proprietors of the ARGUS and staff extend their
sincere sympathy to the bereaved family.

A memorial service for the deceased lady will held at
St. John's Church on Sunday night.

At the Municipal Council meeting on Tuesday night the
Mayor moved that a letter of sympathy be written to the
Leathem family in connection with the demise of their
venerable mother. In doing so his Worship paid a high
tribute to the worth of the late Mrs. Leathem. He had
known her for 20 years, and a more charitable woman
never existed, and she was at all times anxious to help
the sick and needy. She had reached a good old age (77
years), and had reared a respected family, one of whom
(Ald. John Leathem) was a member of that Council. She
had been a devoted mother and would be greatly missed by
her family, to whom the sympathy of the Council was
extended. Deceased was a woman of strong personality,
and despite the many difficulties and reserves she had
met with in her younger days she had always conquered
them. Deceased had gone to her peaceful home, and death
was a debt they would all have to pay sooner or later.
He wished to express the Council's and his own sympathy
with the bereaved family in their irreparable loss.

The motion was passed, the Aldermen standing.

Molong Argus 8 August 1919





The Molong Express office with probably the four Leathem sons, Charles, John, William and Frederick around C 1924

Unreal Truths: The Lies in Every Story

Chapter One: The Living Epistle

1. From Research to Writing a Family Biography

In this section I define the difficulties of writing family biography and the limited and limiting boundaries of what is generally thought to be known about a subject.

The word *biography* from the Greek; *bios*, life and *grapein*, to write, did not appear until the mid-seventeenth century. However, according to Catherine Parke, writing about the lives of others, and the “twin urges for immediate fame and subsequent immortality” (Parke 2002, p. 1) dates back many thousands of years. A biography tells the stories of our lives, “combining the solid satisfaction of facts with the shaping pleasures of the imagination” (Parke 2002, p. xiii). Parke further says we live in a world where events follow other events and biography “plots the circle of existence from birth to death” (Parke 2002, p. xiii). As a naturally curious species, we want to know about other human beings. “The fundamental social quality of human existence helps to account for the enduring and varied history of biography” (Parke 2002, p. xiii) and our need to know about ourselves, through the lives of others, particularly our family.

C. Wright Mills’ *Sociological Imagination* quoted in Goodwin, says that, “The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society” (cited in Goodwin, 2013, p. xix). He further says “the best social science research is located at the intersection of histories and biographies”, (cited in Goodwin, 2013, p. xix), encouraging

biographers to use their learned “life experiences in (their) intellectual work: continually to examine and interpret it” (cited in Goodwin 2013, pp. xix-1).

In my search for accuracy, I intended “Printer’s Ink” to properly reflect the qualities of the “real” Marion Leathem. My objective was to bring to life the woman whose name had so inspired her descendants to speak of her with such awe. I felt compelled to record her life in a way that would somehow make her live again, using as much proven evidence as I could find. The resulting archival research proved more daunting than I could ever have imagined for as Sally Cline and Carole Angier state “the wealth of detail that reality offers is invaluable” (Cline & Angier 2010, p. 56) - but it is also overwhelming.

Conventional forms of biography and historical narratives seemed too barren a medium to rebirth a woman who had lived such an extraordinary life. Biographical enquiry, especially when researched through the filters of family history and Marion’s own newspaper *The Molong Express* (Advertiser, 1887-1891) tended to depict a woman of great moral and social stature with high levels of Victorian values. Her various obituaries, in her own newspaper, trade journals (Wimble 1919) and newspapers, describe a woman almost feared by the writers. They are written in terms of part reverence and part awe, with an eye to the hereafter and a possible future meeting on some more spiritual plane with their subject.

Regretfully, although I found this limited category of information in the early research, I didn’t know what other information was actually available and what was missing, so I didn’t know what to look for to tell the story. In lieu of more personal facts, I decided that conclusive social research around the timeframe of Marion Leathem’s life would increase her authenticity by imbuing her with a sense of placement in her own geographical and chronological era. Historical author Ashley Hay suggests that you “pay attention to the things you see out of the corner of your eye – the peripheral. You need to find the things you don’t know you are looking for” to tell your

story (Hay 2011). Similarly, Andrea Barnett notes, “Research, no matter how compelling may give you the bones of the fiction, but it will never give you the flesh and the blood” (Barnett 2011). In looking at what I had gathered, it was obvious the personal, the interpersonal and the communicative links were missing and I realised that these were the living, connective tissue of the story.

In a similar way Gail Letherby, quoting Liz Stanley, suggests that our own intellectual/academic socialisation affects our interests and our approaches (Letherby 2013) to research particular subjects. She further argues that a consequence of the development of her own ‘sociological imagination’ (Wright Mills 2000) has been a constant concern with “the relationship between the process and the product(s) of research; how what we do affects what we get” (Letherby et al 2013, p. 2). This suggests that “research is an endeavour characterised by politics, power and emotion, and it is important to reflect on the implications of this” (Letherby et al 2013, p. 5). I would suggest that this is particularly significant in relation to a writer’s own opinions and concepts on the subject matter and the results of the research. When the life of the character is so closely aligned with that of the writer, the writer learns, through the various chosen modes of research undertaken, as much about themselves as they do about their character and it is easy to project aspects of self onto the subject who is playing such a significant role in your writing life.

However, in biographical research and writing, the adage “biographers write lives” (Edel 1987, p.13) is not as simple as it sounds. Biography is intertwined with history, family, current events and every other nuance or chance encounter which may have occurred during the lifetime of the subject. What happens *around* the character is as important as what happens *to* them, for every event experienced by the writer as she researches the subject will impact on her character’s life in some way. The scope of the research can be infinite, especially when trying to find out the finer details of the character in the ever-expanding cache of online

information available. Very limited data on a particular person or event available today can expand exponentially with a new Trove entry or academic paper submitted tomorrow and finding the information at the time of research can depend on what areas of interest are trending. Finding the information you want is sometimes reliant on happenstance and interpreting the information that you find is reliant on mindset.

No matter how dedicated and organised the researcher, luck and the random availability of otherwise unknown material will often direct the biographer's writing and areas of research. This unexpected research creates a different mode of thinking and writing, providing the biographer with a renewed sense of excitement about their character. Though side stories can temporarily derail an intended history, in "Printer's Ink", they provided the metanarrative through consideration of the differing modes of the truth which became available during the writing of the artefact.

Her virtues, sheer determination and achievements were what made Marion Leatham, "a woman of cheerful yesterdays and confident tomorrows", and were probably the catalyst of her success. "Above all, she spoke her mind – and she had one to speak, keen and alert and nimble to the very last..." (*Orange Leader* 1919). Although these strengths were what made me want to write about her in the first place, there was no documented indication of her failings or her faults or the soft edges of motherhood and womanly compassion which might have made her more endearing as a character. This was no doubt due to the authoritarian quality of her editorial voice. My task was to turn this one-dimensional matriarch into a multi-faceted woman of substance by fitting her out with a complex personality and holistic range of values and emotive traits. I wanted to expose the woman I had instinctively sensed behind the no-nonsense Victorian collar and the steely, piercing gaze. The challenge also was to reveal these traits through her own writing – the letters she would write under my tutelage and framework.

2. A Life in Letters – Epistolarity as a Mode of Biography

The secret of biography resides in finding the link between talent and achievement. A biography seems irrelevant if it doesn't discover the overlap between what the individual did and the life that made this possible. Without discovering that, you have shapeless happenings and gossip.

(Edel 1985, p. 1)

The epistolary novel form, “from the French *épistolaire* or Latin *epistolaris* meaning epistle, (of a literary work) in the form of letters” (Hoad 2003) has always been of particular interest to me. When I was eight years old, I received my first library card. My mother, who had inherited Marion’s domestic genes, cleaned the house on Saturday mornings and was happy to have me out from under her feet. She asked me to find her something to read, so a great part of this inaugural visit was spent looking for something which would please her.

I knew she liked “real” stories: accordingly I found out from the librarian what a biography was and restricted my search to that section of shelves, but I was unfamiliar with most of the names on the spines of the books until I saw Oscar Wilde in large cursory letters. I had heard *The Happy Prince* (Wilde 1998) on an LP at a friend’s house the previous Christmas, and after reading the book from my school library, thought the author must have been a man of great compassion and understanding to write what I thought at the time the most beautiful story I had ever read.

The Letters of Oscar Wilde (Wilde 1962) was by far the biggest book there and carrying it the six blocks home had me reconsidering my choice as I trudged up the hill. But my mother seemed pleased and became engrossed

in its pages. I started to read pages of the book at random when no one was around and though I had little understanding of the content or the people, something about the wit and anguish and sheer honesty of those letters stayed with me from that day. Wandering accidentally into Wilde's life, those private shared words of intimacy, which Wilde had never intended for an uninvited reader, I had read as if they were directed to me. It formed in my mind an allegiance and loyalty to the man, which has never shifted because I had once read what he wrote to his most trusted friends in his most private moments. I had read his letters.

Because so much of Marion Leatham's personal life was unknown, I needed to create a medium that allowed the reader to form their own opinions of this character. I toyed with the idea of writing her diary instead, but found letters to be a more challenging and more revealing medium. It is too easy in a diary to reveal the true longings of the heart for the diary is written for the writer alone – one expects it to be full of the writer's inner conflict and thoughts. In composing letters, the writer is forced to be more devious. Emotions and subterfuge are unconsciously conveyed by the passage of the words, and the choice of the intended recipient has a direct bearing on what tone the letter will take. Letters are always written in the present tense and the format dictates that the reader will also read them in the present, no matter how long ago they were actually written – they are living epistles.

Letters would allow the reader to provide their own "offstage action" (Forsythe Hailey 1978, p. vi), imagining the backstory and the ancillary characters. I wanted my readers to engage with Marion intimately, even if I could not provide fact upon fact, but use the overall successes and tragedies of her life and the confidential nature of her letters to form their own image of this woman of letters.

Epistolary writing is subjective and emotional; it reaches out as it looks inward, opening up and presenting a consciousness to a specific sympathetic listener. While it appears to be a stream of

consciousness writing, the reader of the epistolary novel is aware that within its boundaries there is another reader..... (Campbell 1995, p. 336).

In a similar vein, Yvette Walker's character writes, "I love your emails, but this letter of yours, it breathes. I'd forgotten that letters could do that. They are so corporeal. It makes me realise there is no depth in data..." (Walker 2013, p. 34). The power of the letter sites the reader in the shoes of the recipient. It places in the reader's hand a personal page of heartfelt words, emotional connection and intuitive insight of what is happening right now.

This intimacy with the written word has seen letters become the basis of an increasing number of creative and biographic works. Margaretta Jolly suggests that "letters are proto-genres whose distinctive yet infinitely malleable features can be best understood through the social and literary codes of relationship" (Jolly & Stanley 2005, pp. 91-118). She further asserts that a large number of "feminist academics write about or through letters precisely as a way to demystify their work" (Jolly & Stanley 2005, pp. 52-53) for letters are considered a more feminine device.

Glenice Whitting says that fictionalised biography uses creative biography "to reveal and examine social concerns" (Whitting 2012, p. 334). She writes that "a combination of sensitive research, autoethnography and creative epistolarity produces novels that celebrate life and storytelling in a language everyone can understand" (Whitting 2012, p. 334). The receipt of a personal letter is a meaningful event for most recipients. The recipient immediately anticipates good or bad news, depending on the identity of the correspondent and the events surrounding the lives of both at that particular time. The physical letter itself has the capacity to engender anticipation, relief, joy or sadness, before it is even opened – it is almost alive.

Letters used as a 'collaborative' writing form bring the reader into the living relationship between the protagonist and their correspondents, watching and

reading as the letter writer tells the story of the relationship and the reader anticipates the outcome through what has, or has not been said. "Writers hold the trust and sensitivities of many people in their hands as they craft a work of art from their imagination and the lives of people around them" (Whitting 2012, p. 315), as this is a sensitive medium which has inner meaning for most people.

In 1980 I read, on my honeymoon in Montreal, *A Woman of Independent Means* by Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey (1978). The story so captivated me that I read her letters at one sitting then started at the beginning and read it again. The elegant telling of a life purely through one woman's letters seemed almost a perfect truth and reaffirmed that "... one of the enduring interests of letter writing is the sense of performance for an audience of one" (Jolly 2008, p. 195). The affinity with the author and the character, I felt, put me on intimate terms with them both, what Rachel Bower calls "the 'I-you' grammar of the epistolary form" (Zimble et al. 2014, p 318). I knew all that existed about them for their personalities had combined in my mind through their shared correspondence. This intimacy etched the character of Bess Steed Garner (Forsythe Hailey 1978) into my mind like no other protagonist.

Similarly, Kate Llewellyn's *The Waterlily* (1987), a personal journal of one year of her life in the Blue Mountains town of Leura, seeped into my unconscious mind so deeply that when I first signed up for a creative writing course it was with this author. I wanted to know more of this woman who had let me into her life and to feel I had correctly interpreted the voice behind the pen. I wanted to learn how she wrote so knowingly about others through her personal musing, without appearing to tell their stories in any great detail. I admired her candid intent, her personal revelations and her truths, offered as a gift of trust to her readers through the medium of her personal epistles.

There have been many other epistolary books which have drawn me into the lives of the characters through this same process. *We Have to Talk About Kevin* by Lionel Schriver (2004), *The Color Purple* (Walker 1982), *Burning*

(Llewellyn 1997), *The Guernsey Potato Peel and Literary Society* (Shaffer 2009), *Dear Fatty* (French 2009), *84 Charing Cross Road* (Hanff 1971), *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* (Jolley 2015), *Brick Lane* (Ali 2003), *Letters from Skye* (Brockmole 2014) and *The Household Guide to Dying* (Adelaide 2008). As in the *Letters of Oscar Wilde* (Wilde 1962), I felt the privilege of seeing the real person behind the pen; hearing their own life story through what they chose to tell others in the most personal way, through their letters.

I believe that specific letters, which use a character's individual speech patterns and idiosyncrasies, can show more about the person than can be conveyed through traditional narrative. Bower comments that critics and readers generally accept the "assumptions that have historically accompanied the reception of epistolary narratives, viewing the letter as a transparent window onto the soul of the letter writer" (Bower, 2014, p. 318). The character is portrayed through the perceived filters of voice, action, motive and intuition; the silent narrative which drives the reader's interest. This lets the reader know what he is not intended to know, much in the same way that real letters reveal much more of the writer than what is committed to the page.

"There is no elaborate art in most of these texts" (Jolly 2008, p. 194): the blurred lines between fact and fiction in each of these books, be they real letters or fictional letters, are defined by the pen of the letter writer and make great statements about their connections, their circumstances and their personalities. They open up the inner mind of the author and suggest "the diegetic stress of literary letters makes them closer to speech..." thereby enhancing "the creation of epistolary meaning...." (Bower 2014, p. 324). I felt that Marion Leathem could tell her story more authentically if the reader was to be witness and jury to her life and personal motivation. This sense of intimacy, dependent upon our comprehension of her written word, would suggest the person I thought Marion to be, without specifically stating any truths I could not prove.

In Wilde's case, where what is written is the perceived reality of the author, and the "epistolary style appears to be designed to convey a sense of spontaneity and spoken language" (Bower 2014, p. 324), the *Letters of Oscar Wilde* has become the unintentional "autobiography that he never wrote" (Wilde 1962, p. xiii). The autobiography perceived through the vignette of letters written over his life tells us so much about the man.

In contrast, Llewellyn's *The Waterlily* (1987) journals only one year of her life and was always intended for publication. What is told is more censored than Wilde's letters and is intended to inform us about the author's actions and thoughts on certain matters. However, it is the unconscious day to day revelations which emerge, possibly unknowingly to the author, that tell us even more, for as Barbara Ker Wilson writes:

The Waterlily is not a novel...not a documentary. Nor is it a diary. It is something in between... And because our lives of every day are inextricably bound up with our past experiences, our philosophies and fantasies and all those other who have peopled our lives or are our present companions and acquaintances, this single year reaches into the past and stretches forward into the future (Llewellyn 1987, jacket).

With the exception of *The Letters of Oscar Wilde* (Wilde 1962), the other books listed above are all letters written by women. Epistolary fiction has long been regarded as *écriture féminine* (Cixous et al. 1976), which suggests that women use this form to write "themselves in a way which reflects their experience as the "other"..." Or as Campbell claims, women especially use the letter "as a metaphor for the self as well as for the addressee" for it is "the mirror in which they examine themselves" (Campbell 1995, p. 336). This literary style fitted the persona of the Marion Leathem I had begun to know. What however became most obvious as I wrote is that Marion's letters also let me find out a lot about myself.

I found that through writing and reading letters we are likely to find the truth. It may be only the writer's truth, or the truth the writer intends to convey through the authenticity of this medium, but these words are still the truth (Murray Journal 2012).

3. The Relationship of Letters and Autobiographic Writing

Life, the shape shifter, can take many forms, a fact the modernists acknowledged by looking for life anywhere and everywhere it might manifest itself. A recipe can tell us as much about what life was like in modernist Paris as a firsthand account of who attended the famous dinner for the Douanier Rousseau or the details of how Picasso managed his strict diet during the First World War...

**(DiBattista & Wittman 2014, p.xii,
Modernism and Autobiography)**

The epistolary form allows the reader to gain a broad view of what else was happening in the world at the time the letters were being written, for the everyday events become part of the conversation of the letters, vignettes of the everyday. The chronicle of the life unfolding in a particular era says much about the character, particularly when the author “tampers with sequence and chronology” (DiBattista & Wittman 2014, p. xiii). This allow for memories and events to be used to more accurately portray a life through the “emotional and moral texture of ordinary experiences that hardly qualify, by any standard or measurement, as momentous or life altering” (DiBattista & Wittman 2014, p. xiii).

Letters allow an excellent medium for this “tampering” as each letter, written as a snapshot, stands alone in time, written to send a greeting, acknowledge

an event or record a moment which, if it hadn't been for the writer's pen, and intent to record words on paper that very day, would have been lost to time.

In this same way, Kathryn J. Crecelius in her essay on George Sand states that Sand's correspondence can be considered among her finest works. The letters "provide a mirror of Sand's times as well as her soul, depicting the major events of the nineteenth century, many from the vantage point of one who was personally involved in them" (Crecelius 1989, p. 257). This statement, emphasising the perceived importance of letters over pure fiction as an authentic representation of life, enhances John Grey's observation that "human beings should follow only values that they have themselves created or somehow made their own" (Berlin & Hardy 2013, p. xii), as people increasingly value authenticity. Sand's letters might only discuss family matters and local interest narratives, but the style, content, tone and frequency say a lot about her relationship with her mother. The letter lets us understand what the writer was thinking as she wrote, sometimes from what she didn't write. Reading beyond the written words, the unspoken narrative is what tells us the real story.

It is often the ordinary in life which is most interesting, for it is the common factor of our very humanness to look for highlights in the everyday. When Katherine Mansfield died unexpectedly, her husband controversially published all her journals, recipes, letters, manuscripts, records of conversation and notebooks, saying that together they would form "an intimate and complete autobiography of the last ten years of her life" (DiBattista & Wittman 2014, p. 143). In his essay on Mansfield (DiBattista & Wittman 2014, pp. 143-156) Dickson asserts that using such intimate and commonplace items, to tell her life, sustained an interest in the author, which may not have occurred otherwise. However, the success of these works prompted Katherine Anne Porter to note that Mansfield was "in danger of the worst fate than an artist can suffer – to be overwhelmed by her own legend, to have her work neglected for an interest in her personality" (Hartley, L 1953, p. 387).

And yet Mansfield's name and life are remembered perhaps more strongly because of this very human association with her personal writing. In this same way that Patrick White had found himself "tremendously intrigued by the private, sometimes autocratic outpourings" of Mansfield and confessed they "do jump at one" (New 1999, p. 51), I wanted readers to engage with Marion and the character she was in total through some small things she had written. I wanted that same camaraderie and engagement with the reader that Rachel Henning had achieved when her letters were published after her death. I wanted to have the reader feel an affinity with Marion through how she wrote her life to her "congenials" (Franklin 1993) and I set out to turn Marion into a woman of letters.

Chapter Two: Sources Used for the Exegesis

1. Enmeshing Research, Fiction and History.

In a novel, the novelist knows everything about the hero or heroine. His characters are his own invention and he can do what he wishes with them. Novelists have omniscience. Biographers never do. The personages exist; the documents exist; they are the "givens" to a writer of lives. They may not be altered.

(Edel 1987, p. 15)

Discover everything about your characters that you can before you write your story. If you get stuck at any point, they will write your dialog for you.

**(Michael J. Kannengieser,
2012 *The Daddy Rock*)**

As truths merged with fiction and research disproved truths, I looked for credibility in what was available. In this section I discuss how using imaginative fictional narrative for veracity can recreate an authentic biography more eloquently than simply using facts.

To rebirth Marion Leathem, I needed to build a structure – a skeleton of the woman on which to hang her words. I created a framework of her life dates on a spread sheet, juxtaposed with a timeline of the events of the relatively new colony, her own community and the world in general, to enable a melding of Marion's world with what was happening around her. The major events in her life were only bald facts, as reported, in those days of non-intrusive press. I found two line column entries about births, deaths and moves to new locations in *The Molong Express*, but there were no frills to

decorate the woman; nothing to pad out her clothes, trim her summer hats or ice her daughter's wedding cake.

To provide these colours for her life, I relied on what was happening around her via opposition newspapers and information from historical societies. An advertisement for a new milliner in Gundagai gave occasion for Marion to buy a hat to wear to the ball to celebrate the opening of the new School of Arts in the town, for example. A concert at the school to raise money for the Belgian orphans, where the players were listed, allowed Marion to write caustic copy to her family about the talent or attire of the attendees. The WWI Cooee March (Gallaher 2005) route through Molong allowed Marion to caution her granddaughters and her reader's daughters about the influx of young men in the town, going off to war in a fever of patriotism and heightened testosterone. Photos in her album of the Prince Alfred Bridge at Gundagai allowed Marion to report to her family on the progress of the route between Sydney and Melbourne and remind them of the flood in 1852 which is still ranked as Australia's worst natural disaster and had taken the life of her father's best friend.

To bridge the enormous missing information gaps in her actual history, I made assumptions on what might have happened during those periods of undocumented evidence using my years of research into her character and of those around her as prompts. I was looking for the noteworthy and unusual, taking W Somerset Maugham's advice that "you can never know enough about your characters" (2001, p. 91), but often there was nothing important and I wondered how I was to make a story work when I had so few really interesting, confirmed facts. But as Llewellyn, talking about her own daily life, notes there is much to be learned from the ordinary.

...it is now clear to me it is all coming and going, and then being alone and then more visitors and cooking and cups of tea and talking and picnics and looking at the vast blue valley and the fire and the autumn and the meals and making dinners and breakfasts and then

looking at the plans and feeding the birds and stoking up the fire and writing in between. Something like that (Llewellyn 1987, pp. 131-2).

Every life is “something like that” including Marion’s. Understanding that ordinary uneventful days are the normal situation, I determined that if I were to portray her accurately, the ordinary had to have meaning as well. This meant writing the routine and unexceptional as engaging news – and of course, through running a newspaper, finding meaning in the meaningless; Marion was an expert at that.

Michael Olmert states that “imagination is as much the biographer’s right and duty as the novelist’s” (cited in Brien 2014, p. 1), and while biography is “popularly understood as a literature that tells straightforward, factual life stories, it is - as a literary form – the site of considerable experimentation”. (Brien 2014, p.1). Brien, for example, discusses how biographers as diverse as Woolfe, Edel. Painter and Ellman use Freudian theories and methodologies to better examine their characters, whilst others use recipes, artwork, music or other media. She notes that authors create biography from whatever data they can collect and use it is a way that “appears authentic and life-like to readers” (Brien 2014, p. 4).

Novarr on the other hand asserts that every biographical subject is different, “every life takes its own form and a biographer must find the ideal and unique literary form that will express it” (cited in Brien 2014, p. 1). Moreover, in finding a way to further the story when there is no available evidence to support it, the writer must look at credible avenues to connect the story with her character and her times. Often this means “taking liberties when no facts are available” (Olmert, cited in Brien 2014, p. 1) to bring the character alive and fill the inevitable breaches in the narrative.

Brien, by way of explaining the varied styles used, gives a comprehensive overview of the biographical form in literature from the twentieth century to current times, focusing on the “considerable innovation” the twentieth century

has made to this genre. She discusses the “biographer’s right to distort the factual record in order to make important psychological or artistic points” and discusses the methodology of understanding “the bibliographical subject through the application of psychological theories and approaches” or “psychobiography”. (Brien 2014, p. 18). “The relation of the biographer to the subject is the very core of biographical enterprise” (Edel 1987, p. 14) and connecting the writer and subject in this way taps the unconscious thought processes of the writer through her emotional connection with the subject. What is experienced at a distance by the character is felt by the writer as a current event, because the writer is telling the story in the present moment. The writer can only write in the present and as such brings her own emotional conclusions to the story of the character. Because the writer has researched the character so intently, the writer can mirror the character’s emotional reaction to any particular situation. In lieu of any actual truth or evidence saying otherwise, there is no reason why this should not be considered viable. This concept indicates the gap in the literature and the research that my work identifies and addresses.

Brien, quoting Motion’s (2001) treatment of Thomas Wainewright as an example of author’s licence in recreating a subject when only limited factual evidence is available, says that “Motion utilises the available historical evidence together with his considerable knowledge of the Romantic period to concoct a ‘Confession’ – a chronological, first person narrative” (Brien 2014, p. 6). I would suggest that Motion’s creative treatment of the “known evidence” adds a dimension for further exploration which may have not otherwise been considered, but which rounds out both the character and the historical events, bringing them into play with each other. This first person narrative creates a story, which is more palatable and therefore more readily accepted by a reader –for it tells both the story and the times and creates pathways for further investigation and adaption of a life.

In a similar vein, G. K Chesterton wrote “literature is a luxury, fiction is a necessity” (2013, p. 1), especially when fiction is the only option to narrate a

life. Writing biography calls for copious amounts of research into the character of choice and, ultimately, using only a fraction of what has been found to document a life. However it was important to me, as it is to most biographers, to support what they have to say about a character with documentary evidence of their existence. I believe the unutilised research contributes as much to the character and the story as the used, for the writer already knows it, even if it is not put down on paper. The unconscious writing mind uses the known elements through the narrativity of the writer to build the ethos, story and the character from what they don't believe they can use. The result is character credibility and authenticity.

2. Biography and History: History Creeps In

When reading stories of the past, known or unknown, readers are more at ease with characters and plots which reflect and legitimise their own conditioning and thinking to particular situations, allowing them to “reframe or recontextualize their day to day experiences” (Sweeney 2006, p. 29). The familiar acts, the known plots and the recognised motives give credibility: however the empathy of the writer connecting with the imagination of the reader is what draws the reader into the character and the story. This seeking of literary connection provides that extra authenticity to believe what is written. This parallel is what connects us with historical characters. Once we have a connection, we have perceived biographic credibility and therefore perceived historical truth.

There are certainly documented parallels between history and biography which show that the historical reconstruction of a life is justified by telling the story. David Lindley in the introduction to *The Trials of Frances Howard*, a Jacobean scandal which saw Howard and her husband convicted of the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury in 1616 while he was a prisoner in the tower of London, explores the amount of conflicting evidence, some of it court related, to the convictions of Howard for murder. Though Howard was a

widely documented figure, there is little of her own writing to depict the events happening around her. This left only legal documentation, social accounts and gossip as the main historical records to evaluate her life and guilt, and as Lindley says “it is the job of the historian to see through the bias of contemporary scandal-mongers...” (2013, p.2). This sentiment is predicated upon his belief that any historian’s “approach to documentary material is inevitably already conditioned by a range of pre-existent story patterns into which the narrative might be cast” (Lindley 2013, p. 3). Lindley further notes even images of characters can predetermine our thinking on the life of a subject, quoting the use of Howard’s portrait on the cover of a children’s cut out book, *Infamous Women* by Bellerophon Books in 1889, as a possible warning to young readers “of the wickedness of women that permeate” (Lindley 2013, p. 11) history.

Kate Grenville in *The Secret River* (2005) asserted something similar in her search for Solomon Wiseman where the honour and respect of the character, generally formed through hand me down information was reliant on records of dubious intent. “It is a fundamental principle of everything that follows that the way we read and make our history has profound implication for the way we manufacture our present” (Lindley 2013, p.12). Using this approach, and with my background knowledge of Marion’s life, I conceived a biography made up of the possibilities which might have been part of her world through the esteem in which she appeared to be held by her community. Most of all I wanted to build an empathetic bridge between the reader and the character, or as Hayden White comments:

What the historian brings to his consideration of the historical record is a notion of the types of configurations of events that can be recognised as stories by the audience for which he is writing... How a given historical situation is to be configured depends on the historian’s subtlety in matching up a specific plot structure with the set of historical events that he wishes to endow with meaning or a

particular kind. This is essentially a literary, that is to say fiction-making operation (Lindley 2013, p. 3).

3. Stepping into the Character

Stepping into Marion's character to write her letters required a sharp detour into pure fiction to keep the story flowing, almost like trying to make Marion fit her story when I believed it should be the other way around. Drawing on the routine and the familiar allowed me to draw inferences from the multi-layered effect of my own family to reproduce her feelings and let her discuss her life with friends and family at a distance, but only telling them what she wanted them to know. In a sense I believed this to be manipulating the truth.

Similarly, Tom Griffiths speaking of Peter Carey's (2001) *The True History of the Kelly Gang* believed that "Carey was playing a game with 'truth' ". He suggests that the story of Kelly was so well known, that Carey "invited comment on historical grounds as well as literary ones", allowing the reader to "evaluate the authenticity of the voice and his ability to get inside the famous helmet" (Griffiths 2015, n.p.) to challenge his interpretation. Likewise for Marion, I had the "big picture" of her life from the told family chronicles and the impact her life's actions had on my ancestors but it was only when sitting down to write what she may have written that I realised how little I really knew about the "other" living, breathing woman inside all the research and how much of what I was writing was experimental and psychobiographical.

When writing *A Woman of Independent Means* (1978) Forsythe Hailey was initially looking for an interesting character to use as material for her protagonist in an epistolary book she intended to call "Letters from a Run Away Wife". Her husband suggested instead, "Why don't you write about a woman who doesn't have to leave home to be liberated...a woman like your grandmother" (Forsythe Hailey 1978, p. vi). She notes that although her grandmother had not been a noted historical figure, she "had challenged the

conventions of her time, and her saga was a portrait in miniature of the broad changes in American life over the twentieth century". Hailey reflected that her grandmother "lived through more tragedies than I would have dared invent for a fictional heroine" and said by comparison she felt comparatively untested by her own life. She thought that by allowing herself to experience the ordeals of her grandmother/character in her imagination, she "could discover the sources of her strength and her joie de vivre..." (1978, p. vi).

Hailey's comments echoed the process I wanted to use, for I felt that Marion Leathem had been indelibly etched into my bodily DNA through the telling and retelling of her truths and the generational characteristics of her descendants. Standing in Marion's shoes I thought may well help me understand my own life through what Marion had endured in her lifetime.

4. Retaining the Past: Family Stories, Archives and Letters to Home

Kerreen Ely-Harper in a recent study on the craft of biography says "The body is a repository for and generator of memories" but that the body can also be "an unreliable narrator" because "the body like memory, is unstable; organic and fickle, not fixed... claims existence, occupies time-space, inhabits place, tells, crafts and repeat stories, forgets and sometimes chooses to be silent" (Ely-Harper 2014, p. 1). Often memory is the only "object" left to the biographer and we use that commodity in the same way we use more tangible objects as mementos to remind us of those who have died, for memory is often the first resource and the most believed.

Most of us have a cache of mementos which have been passed to us for safe keeping or which we have kept ourselves to remind us, generally of a person or event. Often these are photographs and letters used to stimulate memory, but memories can be triggered by almost anything that was associated with a person we loved. These are often kept across

generations, until their significance and connections are lost to memory, or the items decay and are lost physically. Once the living memory ceases to be part of the memento, the significance of the memento decreases with time.

Letters are the most personal and telling of mementos and often the most treasured, as they give us something of the writer's own thoughts and personality, especially if associated with a significant event in our past. A letter written from the Titanic for example recently sold for \$200,000 (Network 7 2014) as a symbol of both the historical and personal elements of that particular tragedy. Its emotional worth may have been much greater. "Personal memory can only become social memory through engagement with the mechanisms and tools of memory transmission" (Ely-Harper 2014, pp. 91-92) and personal letters provide that mechanism better than any other.

My grandmother Jeanne McLean, Marion Leathem's granddaughter, was the main source of oral information on Marion Leathem, remembering her from her own childhood. She was also the keeper of our own cache of family mementos, kept in a biscuit tin: a few newspaper clippings and obituaries from *The Molong Express*, the physical remains of my grandmother's virtual memory – what she deemed important enough to keep. As Martine Hawkes remarks, "These belongings traverse time and space. They were worn, used and held before death" (2014, p. 70), and therefore had significance.

I had hoped this tin of almost sacred keepsakes would contain copies of letters Marion might have written, but there was nothing at all written in her hand. My grandmother had inked in her own dates and references on some of those historical documents, so that *Wimbles Reminder* (Wimble 1919) for example – a copy of the Printing Trades Journal containing Marion's obituary, has, "Important – please keep" in purple handwriting on the cover. "For a history to be passed on, it needs to be told. It needs to be seen and heard. It needs to be experienced and felt in the body" (Ely-Harper 2014, p.

94), and the existence of these documents seemed precious and almost reverential as I opened them one by one. I had seen that same *Wimbles* journal at The Powerhouse Museum in Sydney and had been required to wear white gloves to turn the pages, so I was appalled to see this desecration of my grandmother's copy. However, I realised that when my grandmother was given it, it was not an historical document, it was simply a magazine and that all documents and clipping in the tin were the same.

Joyce A Walker asserts "a body of private and potentially important texts exists that is only accessible to researchers with personal connections to the source" (Walker 1997, p. 11). She refers of course to the letters, the "corporeal" (Walker 2013, p. 34) connection with people from our past, which better than any other source reports "the truth about themselves as they understood it at the time" (Gilgun & Sussman 2014 p. 14). Walker says that letters promote the "connection between friends and the importance of continuity in relationships..." (1997, p. 17) but they also provide the connection with the past. Letters retained after the writer's death provide the most personal connection, along with diaries and journals from ancestors, for they are written in their hand. Letters represent the organic connection between the living and the dead. In *Anzac Sons* Allison Marlow Paterson recounts a brother taking the unsent letters from his dead brother's pockets to "ensure the family received his final words" (2014, pp.58-60). The impact of a letter read or received after the death of the writer has particular significance to the reader; hauntingly, a letter from the grave speaks from death. This phenomenon adds an emotional and soulful quality to an already venerated document, which quickly becomes an artefact, and I was disappointed not to have any letters written by Marion.

For inspiration for Marion's "real" letters and the correct turns of phrase, I used several books of letters from her era, but most particularly, *The Letters of Rachel Henning* which were "written between 1853 and 1882, and were first published in *The Bulletin* in 1951 and early 1952, about 37 years after their writer's death" (Adams 1988, p. vii).

I found similarities between Marion Leathem and Rachel Henning, although the latter was born in 1826 in England, fourteen years before Marion. Rachel was the well-educated daughter of a minister who raised her siblings after her parent's early deaths in 1840 and 1845. She became head of her family "and the responsibilities she thus accepted appear to have influenced the whole of her later life" (Spender 1988, p. x). Although Marion came to Australia as an infant of six months and Rachel was an adult, they both embraced Australia with an enthusiasm and energy that is reflected in the letters of many women of their time and I felt that Henning's mannerisms and attitudes may have been akin to those of the Marion Leathem I imagined. For example, Rachel signed herself very formally in her letters, usually "your sister Rachel Henning" (Henning 1951-2) even to her most consistent correspondent, her beloved sister Etta, and I decided to adopt the formality of this manner for Marion, which although stiff and unfriendly to the ear now, was common practice in the 1800s.

Georgiana Molloy (Hasluck 1955) similarly influences her readers by her interpretation of current events in her letters home. I wondered if the letters were to make her family in Great Britain feel that she was safe and happy in her new country or if Georgiana was at times trying to convince herself that all was well. Probably both. "When Georgiana Molloy writes about the death of her daughter three days after her birth, and the death of her son who drowned in a well, her letters are not a piteous plea for consolation or comfort. They are written after the initial and deadening grief has become more manageable, after she has come to terms with these awful events in her own mind and she is in a position to provide succour and reassurance to her correspondents" (Clarke & Spender 1992, pp.xxvii). This stoic stance, the non-defeatist attitude even in the most dire situations, to me was the embodiment of the Colonial woman. Both Henning and Molloy created a place for themselves using their own natural instincts and interests to generate work, even if previously unknown to them, and fully embraced their new home. I felt the character of Marion Leathem, the embodiment of this

enduring womanhood, might benefit from a little of the known dialogues of Rachel Henning and Georgiana Molloy to tell her own story.

The concept of home is an enduring one. Wally Serote writes “If you go away, remember your home address” (2013, p. 256) and for the colonials and exiles who travelled to new lands, most never to return home, letters were the only connection with family and home and the substance of who they once were and still might be. The identification with “home”, no matter where home is and the “notion of a letter to/from ‘home’ will remain powerfully iconic” (Boniface Davies & Horrell 2005, p.143) to those whose journey has taken them far from family, as was the case in Colonial Australia. As a record of time and distance away from wherever the writer considers home, letters will remain the “marker of time spent... and serve as tenuous yet vital links to a place imbued with personal and ideological significance” (Boniface Davies & Horrell 2005, p.143). Patricia Clarke suggests that women in the colonies “wrote out of a need to express their frustrations at the aridity of their lives. They wrote to satisfy their curiosity, to find out what has happening to other people in other places. They wrote to relieve the boredom, to cultivate networks and to forge friendships” (Clarke & Spender 1992, p. xxiii). But they also wrote to tell their own story.

Letters home were also a way of recording a life lived far away from what had been a previously predictable, “normal” existence, especially for women, who in the new colonies took on much different roles from what they had previously known. For Elizabeth Macarthur, for example, “letters became the vital thread that linked her with friends and family in England, including her sons, who left Australia to be educated ‘at home’ ” (Clarke & Spender 1992, p. xxvi). Letters were the living connection when personal contact was impossible.

For Henning and Molloy, the frequency of their letters home did not really change. Mostly they wrote to catch the departing mail ships, but the length of the letters did when they had something they thought interesting enough to

impart to family thirteen thousand seven hundred and fifty miles away (Lee, 2015). Equally telling were the periods of silence. The reader is left wondering what was happening in those times of no writing. Had letters simply been lost or had the writers not been able to write for some reason? Had they died, been ill or worse, would they ever write again? The gaps in correspondence create another story in the mind of the reader and this concept was heartening for Marion's story, for it meant I could use the silent time frames where I had absolutely no information about her situation, to build tension by letting the reader draw their own conclusions as to what was happening. A single letter is a small vignette of a time in a life - a lifetime of letters is a complete and intimate biography of a life. What is not written tells almost as much as what is.

5. The Authenticity of Letters: Contemporaneous Details as Research and Story

In an archive, there should not be any absolute dissociation, any heterogeneity of secret which could separate (secernere) or partition, in an absolute manner. The archontic principle of the archive is also a principle of consignation, that is, of gathering together.

(Derrida & Penowitz 1995, p. 10)

As I read other books of women's letters from Marion's era I found this truth in all of them. The microcosm of Georgiana Molloy's short life 1805-1842 (Hasluck 1955) is both a history lesson of settlement in Western Australia, a botanical discovery of native plants and a touching account of a short life lived with passion and interest in a new country.

Too many novels and accounts of the first days of the colony show it as disastrous and tragic. Diaries and letters on the contrary

show a picture of pleasant social life with a background of hard work, mostly unaccustomed but not wholly unexpected, with periods of depression offset by the achievement of certain comforts which was to become the Australian way of life. The outstanding face in most of the manuscripts of the first two decades is the evident faith of the writers in the country of their adoption. (Hasluck 1955, p. x)

Following this principle of a life telling a much larger story, rather than just a story telling a life, I gathered local information from the lives of others who lived in districts where Marion had lived, including Mary Braidwood Moyle, 1827-1857 (Clarke 1986). Moyle settled in the Goulburn district, very near the area where Marion Large grew up. Mary's father, like Marion's, was Surgeon Superintendent on the ship on which they immigrated to Australia (Clarke 1986), status which guaranteed an instant *entrée* into society in the colony but did not ensure a comfortable life. In compiling Mary's journals, Patricia Clarke says,

Her short life spanned the extremities of life in colonial Australia, from a comfortable and assured childhood as the "Laird of Braidwood's" daughter and acceptance in Sydney society to the hardships of an isolated bush hut in wild mountain country, from the puritanical simplicity of life with relatives in Tasmania, the poverty and straitened circumstances on the Limestone Plains to the security and assured position of Twofold Bay. (Clarke 1986, p. 271).

Moyle's life through her letters demonstrates the extremes of a new life in the colonies and the similarities with Marion's experiences were too compelling to ignore. Letters, diaries and other archival material provide "history's commitment to evidence that can be revisited, to a journey of discovery that can be retraced and challenged" (Griffiths 2015b, p. 17). The original document "increases the writer's artistic opportunities exponentially" (Griffiths

2015a, p. 17) because they have a tangible connection to the subject, they have belonged to the subject or been touched by the subject. They provide a living connection and if the author is patient enough to reel in the connective elements of the archives, they will adhere to the subject and provide undeniable authenticity to the author's perception, allowing a more holistic account of their life. Sadly, except for a few un-labelled photographs and a gold locket, these personal elements were generally missing for Marion Leathem but I saw no reason why this lack of original ephemera should limit the recreation of who I thought she was. The elements available took on their own importance because of their rarity and around them, using assumption and any available truths, I was able to weave the story of her life.

Hayden White calls letters, photographs, documents and other archival material "the *unprocessed historical record*" (White 1973, p. 5) of the subject, which lends authenticity to work, particularly biography. As archival items they "will never be either memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and (an) internal experience" (Derrida & Prenowitz 1995, p. 14). However, the perceived importance of archival items, their living association with the past memory, "takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory" (Derrida & Prenowitz 1995, p. 14) They almost have their own identity and life.

Letters have long been used as historiographic and social commentary. The authentic voice of a letter says much about what is happening in the world, for it is told through the voice of someone experiencing the present and as such, is perceived as the literal truth which I considered a suitable medium to re-story Marion. Catherine Padmore in researching Lord Duddley's wife Amye, said the two "most compelling artefacts" (Padmore 2009, p. 3) she found in research were letters signed "Amye Duddley" whose authenticity, even though disputed, still provided a clear insight into the character of her research as a living relic of the past and cemented her story. Padmore notes

how holding the original letters allowed her to “observe the style of writing and its corrections and the way the paper had been folded and sealed into a packet” (Padmore 2009, p. 3): all ways to picture more clearly the writer and her intent. For this reason all letters can be considered living and these living letters connect us with the past as intimately as diaries, for they will stay forever “in the present”. Elizabeth Goldsmith says in a similar way that letters are and were “...valued for their ‘natural’, ‘authentic’, and purportedly inimitable qualities”. A good letter writer was one who “could make their letters ‘seem to speak,’ ” (Goldsmith 1989, p. 46).

Letters were the most common way for women to communicate with their ‘congenials’ (Franklin 1993) at a distance and letters were a lifeline of information between rural women who rarely saw other women due to the isolation of the Australian bush. Women also wrote for companionship and probably to discuss the current events of the day which were of interest to them and possibly issues they could not discuss with their men. Women wrote with a natural unaffectedness, which put them “in a privileged relation to the letter genre. Women did not have to worry about shedding a scholastic rhetoric that they have never learned” (Goldsmith 1989, p. 47) being more adept at the “loose structure of polite conversation, at which they were thought to excel” (Goldsmith 1989, p. 47). Writing was as much about communication and camaraderie as it was about polite response and social etiquette – it provided connection.

As Marion was an educated and intelligent woman, it was necessary for her to have some correspondents who were on an equal intellectual plane to discuss the issues of the suffragettes, politics, financial pressures, the Federation and other topical issues of the day as well as those affecting a single parent household. I required a list of correspondents who would allow Marion to vent the full range of her emotions in any situation required to advance the plot. It was also necessary to convey the natural attributes of Marion and not force the story by contriving to tell more than would normally be told in a letter. However with epistolary writing, “show not tell” is not an

option as the entire book is telling, from a single point perspective and the style and voice of the letters determines the writer's worth.

Marion's background however, being brought up by a mother who founded and ran Ladies Seminary Colleges (Elworthy c 1985) and being a teacher in these colleges herself before her marriage, meant her writing style and ways of addressing situations would have been, I assumed, more formally correct than was common in a town of squatters, miners and ex-convicts.

Her early letters would depict the more genteel upbringing and correctness of her heritage but her ongoing circumstances and responsibilities needed to reflect her growing independence and changing values as she was tested through widowhood, financial duress and family crisis. The letters would also reflect her increasing maturity as Marion was pitted against a full range of situations and people who were both helpful and obstructionist to her cause. In excerpts from Marion's own paper, *The Molong Express*, her writing is succinct and to the point. Even when an Editor was engaged by the *Express*, you still sense Marion's tone. The voice of the newspaper, strong and opinionated, was constant through the many years and many editors of Marion's ownership.

A quartette of drunks this week. Prospects look a little brighter.

For loosely wagging a foul tongue in public on the 20th, W. Ward had to part with the price of 30 drinks and to stop alone in an unfurnished apartment for 7 days. This is as it should be, and often should have been previously, in this town.

(The Molong Express 1888)

At other times her wry sense of humour shows an impish quality:

From the personal Column of the Sydney Morning Herald: - and says

‘Toomey, when shall I hear from you? Heart sick and weary, fondest love, True Katey.’

The only sudden cure we know for this agony is drowning.

(The Molong Express 1888)

As Marion became more assured of her public writing, I suggest that the style and tone of her *Express* voice may have seeped into the personal letters as she and her newspaper became one. My depiction of Marion, allowing her to have this respect and authority in the more private aspects of her writing, but still the formidable woman behind the pen, permitted me to provide a payment to the debt I had perceptually incurred to her by borrowing from her life to write her story.

Marion’s childhood letters and her early demeanour sound precocious. Her parents, as constant correspondents until their deaths, are written more candid letters when her circumstances are difficult and this also applies to her elder sister Maria Smith. Letters to her sisters Henrietta and Cecelia, both married to newspapermen (James Elworthy and John Williamson), allow Marion to discuss the newspaper business with sympathetic and connected recipients so theirs is more regular correspondence. Only occasional letters are written to the rest of her siblings, to establish facts or mark events of significance to Marion’s story.

Marion’s daughters Helen (Nellie) and Alice are regular correspondents, though even when living at home Marion’s children may have received letters in much the same way as Mary Braidwood Moyle writes to her daughter Florence on her ninth birthday:

You are now nine years of age & ought to be a great assistance to me & a very great comfort – this I am sorry to say you are not

altogether. I have often to find fault with you & at times you are careless & very troublesome – with your lessons in particular.

I sincerely hope my child you will try diligently to improve (Clarke 1986, p. 263).

To round out Marion's relationships I chose Julia Bingham (Elworthy c 1985), the daughter of the Gold Commissioner from Tumut who had been a contemporary of her father. I am unsure of this real life connection, but the ages and circumstances seemed to fit and Marion's younger brother Richard eventually marries Julia's daughter which set up a link to assist the passage of the letters and exploit the connection, as writing to a friend allows for epistolary intimacy of a different kind.

Her Cousin Sir Henry Wrixon (Eastwood 1976) is an obvious choice because of his place in the history of this country and his age, which is similar to Marion's. Letters to him allow Marion to propose thoughts and discuss issues she might not with anyone else. The Wrixon inclusion also helped set the pace of the letters alongside current events, as both Henry Wrixon and his father, Judge Arthur Nicholas Wrixon, (Corfield et al. 2004) were involved in many milestone events in the history of the colony. This relationship allowed Marion access to an inner enclave of knowledge around the Federation, politics and society in Melbourne and to Henry Parkes (Dando-Collins 2013), who had connections to Marion through her husband's early apprenticeship on *The Daily Empire* (Walker 1976). Marion believed she had a right to say what was often inflammatory to her readers and I was put in mind of Thomas Carlyle's words from *Sartor Resartus*:

A Preaching Friar settles himself in every village: and builds a pulpit, which he calls Newspaper. Therefrom he preaches what most momentous doctrine is in him, for man's salvation; and dost not thou listen, and believe? (Carlyle & Tennyson 1984, p. 299).

The rest of the letters are written to a variety of correspondents as the plot follows her life through current affairs, the trials of her family and the newspaper. The intention was to allow Marion a balanced measure of business and personal correspondence to show her varying emotions, biases and peccadilloes as she wrote her way through her problems and triumphs.

When undertaking a final edit for “Printer’s Ink”, it was decided that Marion’s earlier letters from her childhood until the opening of *The Molong Express* newspaper should be deleted to tighten up the overall story and refocus the objective. As Marion was 37 years old at this time, a lot of research into the early years of her life comprise parts of this exegesis, particularly in relation to the research, so even though the final artefact is a more abbreviated version of Marion’s life, I have left references to these earlier letters in this exegesis to explain some of the processes I have used to restore Marion.

6. Epistolary Fiction and Their Discourses

The one point dialogue of an epistolary novel does not allow the writer to elaborate on what is not known outside of the opinion or knowledge of the writer, according to Gwenda Koo. “Some novels thrive in this form thanks in large part to authors that are especially adept at manipulating the letters to deliver information and plot without it appearing to be a story contrived and condensed merely for the written word” (Koo 2013, n.p.). The more talented the writer, the more fortunate the reader, for the entire history and fortunes of the writer was conveyed sometimes by a single letter. If a single letter is all that remains of a subject, they are judged by what is written in that moment of time, irrespective of what else happened in their lives.

Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey notes on the significance of writing a novel in letter form, based on the impact of epistolary communication: “Letters are a very dramatic device, spanning time, eliminating the need for narrative description, and, most important, enlisting the imagination of the reader to

supply the offstage action” (1978, p. vi). This concept of the reader as co-author greatly appeals to my sense of dramatic engagement for the novel, as the imagination of the reader, if sufficiently stimulated by the various situations and characters, could enable any number of scenarios for each letter.

This freedom in “Printer’s Ink” allowed me to leave out items I could not confirm as truths but still leave inferences to allow the reader to interpret the story through their own theoretical gaze and world history. KB Patterson comments “the pivotal time in epistolary discourse is therefore the present...” (1995, p. 123) when both the writer and the reader of the letter are ‘anchored’ in the now but can look both backwards and forwards in time. “The relationship of both temporal aspects to the present is important in the unfolding of letter narrative” (Patterson 1995, pp. 117-18). The writer supplies the framework and the milestones and the reader is free to interpret what may be happening between times, often based on their own life history, be it active, sedentary or neutral. We often see what we already anticipate in a letter, based on our understanding of what has gone before.

A further complication in “Printer’s Ink” was creating enough drama in the day to day, repetitive narrative of Marion’s life to retain the interest of the reader. It is easier to create drama when you can make up what is happening; telling only the truths leaves little room for creative tension. In *Joanna’s Husband, David’s Wife*, Hailey’s character Joanna writes “What really happened is unimportant. Fiction has its own logic. You have to face the truth first...but finally you must free yourself from the facts and create a lie that tells a larger truth.” (Forsythe Hailey 1978, p. 243). This proved to be the definitive reality in “Printer’s Ink”, as during various long spans of Marion’s life I could not find any factual research of great interest to fill in the gaps between bearing children and her husband’s death, besides the birth of their newspaper, so intuition had to become the catalyst for much of Marion’s story through her letters.

Since the sixteenth century, when the familiar letter was first thought of as a literary form, male commentators have noted that the epistolary genre seemed particularly suited to the female voice” (Goldsmith 1989, p. vii).

Henning was a particularly good example of the female correspondent, with David Adams commenting, “The outstanding characteristic of the letters is the chatty, day-by-day, observant and often downright description of events in Australia’s past....” (Adams, 1988, preface). I decided that Marion’s fictional epistolary discourse would need to address that same reality – her letters needed to stand alone as markers to her life, though following the traditional format of the times.

Dale Spender suggests, “Women have been writing letters since women learnt to write and there is a rich though not readily appreciated tradition of letter-writing which warrants attention in its own right” (Spender 1988, introduction). Even when women were not supposed to write anything else, they were still allowed to be letter-writers partly because, as Virginia Woolf has suggested, letter-writing could be a help rather than a hindrance to the head of the family, and a means of maintaining family ties. “Letters did not count” (Woolf 1989, p. 4), comments Virginia. “A woman might write letters whilst she was sitting by father’s sick-bed. She could write them by the fire while the men talked without disturbing them” (Spender 1988, p xii).

But letters did count. Unsurprisingly, letters to and from Australia were a lifeline for everyone, particularly women, to whom the task of letter writing seemed to fall most often. The arrival of the mail was an occasion where everyone gathered to hear the news. “It was just like a regular serial, except that the heroine was personally known to the readers and the stories that were told were often stranger and more thrilling than fiction” (Spender 1988, p xii). Spender notes that even though letters did not always carry good news, it was common practice for women to not unduly worry family many miles away. Only when the crisis had passed, were the news and possible

dangers conveyed. “And if the drought had broken, the patient recovered or peace had been made, why then it could become material for a striking short story!” (Spender 1988, p.xii).

7. Finding the Subject’s Authentic Voice: The Voice in Writing

Imaginative literature is about listening to a voice.

(Alvarez 2005, p. 9)

Finding a voice for Marion proved one of the most challenging tasks of my research and the most important for in “Printer’s Ink” “epistolarity...became, what Bakhtin calls a ‘compositional surrogate of the author’s discourse’ ” (Lanser 1992, p. 46). This “ideological equivalence between the author and the fictional letter-writer...is dominated by a single voice” (Lanser 1992, p. 46). If Marion was not writing authentically, there was no other voice to provide validity to her letters. There was only one voice and it had to encompass the familial, the temporal and the historical.

Kate Llewellyn once advised me to acquire the skill of ‘overhearing’ conversations to develop voice, claiming “people say such marvellous things”. I have many times shaped an entire story from an overheard snippet of dialogue between people in the most ordinary situations and used their turn of phrase or accentuated terminology to imagine what these people are like and therefore what their story might be. Alfred Alvarez, says “that for a writer, voice is a problem that never lets you go” (Alvarez 2005, p. 9) and that “in order to write well you must first learn how to listen” (Alvarez 2005, p. 11). So I listened to Marion and all she might be saying. I listened for her in every letter I read by other women of her times, every article and story, every person’s voice standing on the platform of the railway station in Molong and

in the words of her newspaper editorials, until she was running a parallel life to my own: I could hear her in every conversation I had.

Transcribing what Roland Barthes calls that “grain of the voice”, (Barthes & Coverdale 2009, p.322) into a believable story requires the narrative voice to run continuously inside the writer’s head, until it comes naturally, telling its story to the writer so she can capture that voice and story on her page.

Debra Adelaide claims that although “it is generally agreed that literature works when the author has captured a voice” yet she believes “It is when the voice has captured the reader” (2007, p. 7) and the “narrator’s presence is a transparent film” (2007, p. 2) that the reader is engaged. Adelaide also stresses that this true “...voice emerges when authors retract their gaze, look inward, become their own reader” and pretend “they have not written those words” (2007, p. 7).

In “Printer’s Ink”, voice is more than words and inflection, it is also the perception of the character in total, her upbringing, her style, her speech and her demeanour; Marion was after all a Victorian mother and England was still the governing influence on deportment. “The British under Queen Victoria’s reign are often thought of as exalting motherhood” with the queen hailed as “mother, Wife, and Queen” (Thaden 1997, p. 3). Her rule of over sixty years saw her exalted by her subjects who “seemed to agree that the queen’s position as supreme mother and wife elevated her even more than her position as political head of her country” (1997, p. 3).

Marion’s dress and demeanour was so reminiscent of the monarch that the Victorian voice model suited her image, but this same reserved voice did not allow for open and free disclosures in the letters Marion would write. Patricia Clarke notes that “The restrictions inherent in the upbringing and role of women in the mid-nineteenth century are apparent” (1986, p. 4) and this guided my writing of “Printer’s Ink” to some extent in what was available to be discussed and what was taboo. For example, Clarke wrote of Mary Braidwood Moyle, “It would be unrealistic to expect such a conventionally

raised lady in an age when so much was unspoken and unwritten to comment on her frequent pregnancies, but there are sufficient hints to discern something of her attitude” (1986, p. 4).

However, sections of Mary’s journals, which deal with her dissatisfaction at her husband’s behaviour and circumstances, have been excised by someone, possibly Mary herself, or a descendant who was concerned about how the family would be interpreted by generations to come (Clarke 1986, p. 4). I was interested to note that Mary felt free enough to express these feelings at all, for although journals were a record of private thoughts and events, they were often considered a family chronicle and were passed around family members back in England (Clarke & Spender 1992, p. xxvi) as a way of keeping track of the events in another country and the fortunes of the writer. It was not unusual for a letter or journal to be passed around the family at large for multiple readings and in Marion’s family where there were so many siblings, with Marion living at a distance, her letters would have been written to all her readers, not just her parents, so her letters would have reflected only what she wanted her audience to know. The personal issues were minimised and anything too intimate or inflammatory would be left out as in this Victorian era where the monarch led by example, her subjects appeared to have the same stoic attitude.

What was apparent to me was the “voice” determining and shaping the character. I believe Marion, especially after widowhood, would have changed her demeanour to show stability, confidence and success. I believe she already possessed these qualities, but to reassure family at a distance, she would purposely restrict what she wrote in her letters, telling only those events which bode well for her family and herself. Marion, examined for so long, living beside me in my every moment, her DNA firmly inside every gene of my writing psyche, transcribed herself onto the pages as clearly as if she were writing those letters herself, which in fact she was, simply because she had imprinted herself so strongly on my unconscious mind. This was the real voice becoming the story (Adelaide 2007, p. 9).

According to Freeman and Le Rossignol, to achieve authentic voice, “the first person narrator must simultaneously be perceived by the reader as truth telling, as reliable, as capable of creating insight: they must engender the reader’s trust.” (Freeman & Le Rossignol 2015, p. 6). It is the personality of the character/writer permeating the writing and delivering legitimacy to the work by means of the individual “voice” telling the story which allows the story to be believable and this is particularly significant in an epistolary format.

Author, Phillip Lopate, notes that when he sits down to write he hears a voice in his head and asks, “Who sent that voice? Did I fabricate it? If I did, I can’t remember” (2012, n.p.), suggesting the voice often comes unconsciously, possibly generated by entity of the story itself. Similarly, Philip Gerard notes, “Voice is what the reader hears in his mind’s ear, the strong sense that the words are coming from another living human personality with a unique perspective on events.” He says the paradox is, “If you *try* to have a voice you’ll fail” (Gerard 2013, p. 57) for voice is instinctive and develops through more subtle form. “ ‘Authenticity’ in writing is said to be the key to synthesising the narrative voice and what we might call the emotional, expressive voice of the author, the embodied voice, in the one text” (Adelaide 2007, p. 8), synthesising the story into a whole.

Josie Arnold suggests that a “sous-voice exists in texts and is derived by the reader of the text” (2010, p.15) and in this form of biography/autobiography, the voice depends upon both the writer and the reader getting inside the character and allowing the reader to become the “translator of the writer’s text” (2010, p. 15) Or as Debra Adelaide asks “How many times have we read a book that we believe the author has written for us and us alone? Felt almost physically the author sitting beside us speaking in a low voice directly in our ear?” (2007, p. 7). For although there is a tendency to write for a specific market, we understand that books which have been written purely for the writer’s own pleasure also “have the capacity to speak to a vast readership” (Adelaide 2007, p. 7).

Marion's voice in her letters was a matter of major deliberation as the writing was first person narrative, even though the work is fictional history. The very formal and long winded tones of Victorian women letter writers although authentic were a challenge for an eighty thousand word novel and a seventy-eight year lifespan. The major test was to recreate that elusive 'trusted' voice, which was lurking on the periphery of my writing, in a more succinct form and still remain in character. I unconsciously allowed the final voice of Marion to "emerge gradually as the writing progressed" (Freeman & Le Rossignol 2015, p. 10), agreeing with them that though establishing the final voice is a conscious process, the concept of voice is elusive, but is "recognisable when the writer finds it" (Freeman & Le Rossignol 2015, p. 10).

The other component of voice is the language the writer will use and how much authenticity around the language should be allowed in the work. Kate Grenville said of her rough, lighter man character, William Thornhill, that "The first draft had a definite voice; stately, serious, even pompous" (2006, p. 163) which went against the upbringing and station of the character. Initially Marion had a very pompous and contrived voice, prone to over explaining and over stating, as I had found in the letters of her contemporaries. Grenville was writing about a Thames waterman, so I understood why that voice would not work for Solomon Wiseman, but I was writing about a well-educated, well connected descendant of the upper classes.

With a similar dilemma, Hilary Mantel in "The elusive art of making the dead speak", (2012, n.p.) states:

I use modern English but shift it sideways a little, so that there are some unusual words, some Tudor rhythms, a suggestion of otherness... so the past just touches the reader on the shoulder as her eyes pass easily over the line.... If the words of real people have come down to us, I try to work them in among my inventions so that you can't see where they join.

Because, as Kelly Gardiner suggests (2012, p. 3), “authenticity can’t be created”. She says instead that readers expect the voice of historical fiction to be more familiar than authentic and kept in line with the genre of the story. But she also says the past is a “foreign country” and that “characters in stories set in the past are always other. When we write them, when we give them a voice, we impersonate people from an imagined past, not a historical past” (Gardiner 2012, p. 11).

Marion’s final voice remained formal, with a sometimes sardonic tone throughout “Printer’s Ink”, even when writing her most intimate letters. Because I was trying to depict her respectfully and authentically, with the nagging interference of transference eroding my writing confidence, I needed to constantly assess how that voice would sound to the reader. It has been suggested during a partial reading of some of Marion’s letters in 2014 that her voice should be less formal, but the true character was a rigid woman of very strong opinions and morals. I felt to ‘soften’ or modernise her words was not aligned with the character I want to portray, so the final version of “Printer’s Ink” retains this voice, conveying Marion’s character in the comportment I thought she would have preferred for her memoirs.

Chapter Three: The Backward Story

1. The Past Becomes the Present

In 1788, women were represented in the colony at a ratio of seven to one, which impacted the conditions and expectations in these time in relation to the role of women (Australian Govt. 2015). Much has been written of the colonial woman in Australia, and the evolving role of Australian womanhood, as a way of “explaining the present condition of women in terms of their past exploitation” (Bevege 1982, p. xxi) in a country that was founded on “convict birth” (Dixson 1999, p. 4) Miriam Dixson in *The Real Matilda* wrote that “struggling but respectable working-class and middle-class people held strongly negative views... most emphatically about convict women” because to be respectable meant the difference between survival and starvation (1999, p. 4). Dixson believes the “themes of coherence and fragmentation... touched colonial Australians at both personal and social levels as they struggled to take root in a strange land” (1999, p. 6), coming as they did from mainly Anglo-Celtic societies to rise above these distinctions.

The non-convict women, wives, daughters and sisters of immigrants who chose to travel and settle in this land, took on roles previously unknown to women in England. For example, Henning writing to family at “home”, “wanted to let her English family know what life was like in her adopted land but she also wanted them to know what she was like” (Spender 1988, p.xii), for this writer of letters, who rode on long horseback treks, faced the dangers of the uncharted Queensland bush, camped in the outback and “faced physical danger and all manner of threats was not the same prim and proper spinster who had lived in England” (1988, p.xii).

I believe that Marion Leathem, like her mother before her, grasped an opportunity to develop a place and a role for herself away from the stereotypical roles of her English sisters and enjoyed the opportunity to excel

in her own way. They were both highly educated, intelligent women who supported their families through their own professions. Both enjoyed the recognition of their efforts, Mrs Large through various newspaper accounts in the Monaro area and Marion through the widespread distribution of her newspaper.

Most of what is known of the authentic lives of Colonial women has been determined through their surviving letters and journals. Elizabeth Webby comments that settlers were confronted by the unfamiliar in all things and that “even things that looked more familiar, or homely, could on closer inspection turn out to be quite the reverse” (2000, pp. 50-51). She notes that there was a “ready market in England for accounts of New South Wales” and letters home played an important role in informing those who stayed behind how well the immigrants were faring: “By the 1840s women were also beginning to supply accounts of life in Australia for the British (publishing) market” (Webby 2000, p. 52), but letters were the most commonly read communication and Colonial women the most common correspondents. The “perceived truths” in their letters and the potential to read between the lines, create some of the most lasting images of Colonial life and Colonial womanhood.

The process of writing both the artefact and exegesis was stimulated and informed by the third component of the process, the reflective journal, which contains the more personal and less rational responses to the PhD process and journey. The journal “is a more formalised type of journal writing, engaging as it does not only with the moment of writing, but the moments between writing - the ongoing, reflective, critical and analytical learning process of 'being a writer' ” (Bourke & Neilsen 2004, p. 3).

My journal contains the first words I wrote on the first day of my candidature and is used for constant referral as I write this exegesis. It is easily the wordiest document of all three parts of my PhD. This “journal is more than an instrument for whimsical entry, for non-reflective anecdotes; it is a flexible

instrument of personal and scholarly insights" (Bacon 2014, p. 2) and tracks and stores the evidence of the diversionary journey of my writer's mind.

"Journaling informs the mapping of self and research" (2014, p. 2) and allows the freedom to explore the varied avenues and detours of the data which emerged along the way. Because this form of 'meta-writing' is not an examinable document to be dissected and improved or submitted for scrutiny, it contains, like letters, the most accurate truths about the PhD process, captured at the time of their occurrence and allows me, most importantly, to examine how I will "bridge the gap in knowing." (Bourke & Neilsen 2004, p. 13). It is a document which "asks questions about process, product, praxis and practice" (Bourke & Neilsen 2004, p. 3) and allows me to cross-examine my own writing through both the artefact and the exegesis.

Nigel Krauth states that the exegesis should be "a sort of critical journal, a reflective account of processes undertaken while creating the accompanying work, having a close umbilical relationship to it" (2011, p. 1) and tying together the various parts of the whole. He describes the journal's role in informing the exegesis as "unmasking and 'disclosure'...an insight into the process" (Krauth 2011, p. 2). In this exegesis, the journal was a valuable measure of the processes of transference and countertransference during critical stages of the writing, as I faced the experiential research of myself as part of theoretical framework of the artefact. The journal is the no-frills account of my own self-enquiry.

Further, the majority of Marion's letters were birthed during the writing of the journal entries. As my own emotional spills transferred into Marion's particular consequences, and generated reactions based on what was happening around her, there was a natural segue into her life that allowed my truths to become her authentic letters.

2. The Importance of Experiential Research for the Exegesis and the Exegetal Journal

Writing “Printer’s Ink” and “Unreal Truths” became a total immersion in the epistolary processes. The letters Marion wrote became the emotional glue which drew together the biographical and epistolary methodologies of research and transformed them into the various autobiographical articulations of Marion Leathem’s pen. And as “feminist epistemology suggests the need for a reconceptualisation of autobiography and biography” (Cotterill & Letherby 2013, abstract) this framework had Marion writing Marion’s letters; me writing Marion’s letters; me writing Marion’s journal and me writing my own journals which ultimately brought all the many letters, thoughts and words together into the two documents for the PhD.

In a sense the exegetical journal is my own book of letters. In trying to find a voice for Marion which had an authentic tone, I tried various methods of getting into character before I wrote, in an experiential way, what Jen Webb terms “creative representation” or “theoretical investigation” (2012, p. 2). I purchased ink and quill and spent frustrating times with ink blobs and torn pages as I scratched words into the paper, to write as Marion would write. My haste to record her thoughts left wet ink and smeared pages as a frustrating testament that Marion had a much steadier mind and more methodical approach to writing than me. The experience did however give me an opening into her life as I appreciated the more orderly process of writing in her time. This applied to her many day-to-day tasks, chopping wood, carrying water, buying ink and supplies for her newspaper and even making her children’s clothes. Each small activity performed in the way she would perform it and recorded in the journal, provided experiential practice for becoming Marion.

Dominique Hecq suggests that creative writing is an “experiential activity which mobilises both unconscious and conscious processes” (2012, p. 7) and in re-enacting small tasks Marion would have undertaken, such as writing and reading by candlelight, I was able to sense the connectedness between who I am and who I thought Marion to be. When I read Grenville’s account of making ‘slush lamps’ to envisage how her characters could have

managed tasks at night inside their hut, (2006, p. 160), in a similar way to experience what her characters had to do as part of an everyday chore, I was relieved my experiment had at least not needed to have the whole house aired to get rid of the experiential consequences.

I accepted that I had not been born to quills but did love fountain pens and gave in to that less intimidating medium to record my thoughts and Marion's, for the more I wrote about her and from her, the more entwined our lives became. Following my own writing practice, I wrote her letters in the early morning, when I thought she would have had time to write, before work, before the children arose, before the town stirred. This became my morning routine for Marion, writing letters by candlelight, often before the sun had risen, as for years I had written my journal for myself. Something of the dark space encircling my candlelit halo gave me an insight into how intimate it would be to write all one's letters by candlelight and I thought again of the intimacy of Oscar Wilde's letters and Georgiana Molloy's, writing quietly at night to a correspondent who was possibly half a lifetime away. I felt something of Krauth's "awareness of being and responding; the alertness to recording details;... the attraction to recognizing minutiae of my body's responses" (Krauth 2008, p. 2) as an "insight into processes informing the finished product" (Krauth 2011, p. 2). It is easier to share intimate thoughts when no one is around to disturb you or look over your shoulder or when you feel your reader may be asleep. Something about the candlelit seclusion had me ghosting Marion and once or twice I had the distinct feeling of "her tutting disapproval at something I had penned in her name and a shiver would travel down my spine" (Murray Journal 2012).

3. History, Authenticity and the Narrative

The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise.

To recognise this task and this promise is the mark of the classic social analyst.

(Wright Mills 2000, p. xix)

What was authentic to people in 1840 when Marion was born may not sound as convincingly authentic now, when viewed through our more informed but less experiential prism of subjective knowledge.

Historical authenticity, and particularly biography, when viewed through the more recent and “sometimes grudging, acceptance of the contribution of memory in historical research” (Seale et al. 2004, p. 34) is as much about the people and events happening around the subject’s life, as well as the greater events of the world and the subject. Authenticity often relies on historical perception, what the researcher believes happened and this is a necessary subterfuge when only limited information is available. Clive Seale quotes what he calls the “common sense” of qualitative research practice, the assumption “that facts are ‘out there’, can be ‘collected’ and therefore can constitute ‘evidence’ ” (Seale et al. 2004, p. 34). Any divergence from this is unacceptable. However he also says “this failure to relate in a convincing way to the great issues and concerns of the day ‘takes anti-foundationalism to be foundational’ ” (Seale et al. 2004, p. 7).

However Hayden White argues that narrative solves the problem of translating “knowing into telling” (1980, p. 5), to allow a story to be relayed to an audience in a recognisable way. Narrativity in history, is therefore “the analysis of history as history”; narrativity being the ‘device’ which “historiographers understand as organising the understanding of historical reality to render it comprehensible to the reader” (Branley 2012, p. 28). Similarly, Roland Barthes presents narrative as “international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself” (Barthes & Duisit 1975, p. 243), a way for writers and historians to “report their truths” and “generate the effects of reality” (White 1980, p. 2). “It is narrative that creates the possibility

of historical discourse”, (Kellner 1987, p. 3) to bring to life the event or the person who is worthy of a story.

Getting the story told is the writer’s decision. How the story is told is therefore reliant on the owner of the knowledge and their particular circumstance of knowing and reason for telling. Kellner says “the new historical methods and recently explored kinds of documentation often deal with the general and the mass, rather than the particular and the individual” (1987 pp.1). I believe successful narrativity relies on the skill of the story teller, for if, like all writing, the telling is not engaging, there is a danger that the story will not be heard, embraced and known.

Kate Grenville echoes this sentiment in her 2005 defence of her treatment of history in *The Secret River*. She claims “The voice of debate might stimulate the brain” but “it takes the voice of fiction to get the feet walking in a new direction” (Grenville 2006, p.9) and that direction for me was to bring the past into current consciousness. “History and fiction journey together and separately into the past; they are a tag team” (Griffiths 2015b, n.p.) but they lend authenticity to each other and when the narrative voice of history has a sense of reality “ they are drawn to one another in the quest for deeper understanding” (Griffiths 2015a, p. 18).

The story of Marion Leathem is also more than Marion alone. Her family’s stories are part of her heritage and what determined her final character traits. Her father’s role as doctor, sheriff, surgeon superintendent and even mail courier was reliably documented (Geelong Hospital Library). He earned the sum of ten shillings and sixpence per head (Geelong Hospital Library) for tending to the 152 passengers (and crew) under his care on their trip from Queenstown near Cork to Port Phillip (Nicholson 1990, n.p.). The *Branken Moor’s* surgeon’s logs cannot be found, but there are similar surviving documents which reflect such trips (Haines 2003) and detail the trials he would have experienced.

More significantly to Marion's self-development I believe was the influence of her mother, Mary Ann Wrixon Large. Although descended from a long line of sheriffs, magistrates and wealthy landowners in Cork she took on tasks equal to that of her husband for maintaining their family's income. She would have been jointly responsible for the passengers' welfare on the ship, even though she had three children under the age of three at the time. My perception is that Mary Ann Large would have been a formidable companion and possibly the stronger of the pair in relation to discipline, motivation and determining the future of their journey and perhaps their final destination.

This is further evident in Mary Ann's brother, Judge Arthur Nicholas Wrixon (1810-1861). Arthur Wrixon, who was the second country court judge appointed in Victoria and living "at Bath's Hotel in Ballarat when it was hit by fire from soldiers storming the Eureka Stockade" (Corfield et al. 2004, p. 555) migrated with his wife and children to Melbourne in 1850, nine years after Dr and Mrs Large. His son, Sir Henry Wrixon became a Member of Parliament in Belfast, Attorney General of Victoria and Vice Chancellor of Melbourne University amongst his many public roles (Eastwood 1976).

I travelled to Ireland, Marion's country of birth, for background and deeper experiential research looking for what Nigel Krauth terms an "embodied comprehension of" Marion's "environment" (2008, p. 1). I was touched by the sophistication and structured life of both Cork and Belfast. These were established cities where Dr Large could have practiced medicine in heated rooms, on paved streets with an assured income from patients and family of means, to support him during those early years of marriage. They are cities far removed from the fledgling, wattle and daub townships of Tumut and Adelong and the isolation of the Monaro bush. These were not people who would starve during the potato famine. Standing in those Irish streets changed the perspective of my understanding of their immigration to Australia and let me question further the motives and strength of this family.

If it was Dr Large's poor health which instigated their trip to Australia (Advertiser 1881), it must have been dire indeed to abandon a bountiful and certain future. I wonder if it was perhaps instead a sense of adventure that drove the young family into a wooden ship on the 1st August 1841, which did not arrive in Port Phillip until the 3rd December 1841 (Janson n.d.). They were not forced to flee from hunger or lack of money nor were they chasing the lure of gold. They were comfortable, well connected and educated people taking a major journey which would forever change their lives and perhaps separate them indefinitely from all they knew and loved.

These strengths are evident in Marion Leathem throughout her life; the generational courage and inner determination to succeed are inherited factors from parents who were pioneers themselves. Telling this backstory informs the present narrativity as eloquently as taking the reader to Cork to view for themselves all that they left behind, and adds further scaffolding to the fact by fact account of Marion's life.

4. Real Life: Respect for Documentary Evidence

**Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because
Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities. Truth isn't.**

(Mark Twain, Following the Equator)

In this section I discuss the necessity to discover real facts to create believable fiction and the difficulties in ascertaining that the obtained research is reliable. Any lack of authenticity in the information being sought by the writer impacts strongly on the final story and the writer's ability to believe in what they are actually writing. It is natural to want to convey the real truth about the subject in a biography, and frustrating to find that, no matter how meticulous the research, the writer can only reproduce what at best, is the assumed truth.

Michael Benton claims it is the biographer as “the story teller who must adjudicate between ‘the facts of history’ – the documented, verifiable data; ‘historical facts’ selected for inclusion in the ‘life’; and ‘quasi-facts’ ”, meaning the “status of the literary works” when used to retell a life story (2015, chapter 3, n.p.)

However, no biographic story can rely only on the central accepted truths of a person’s life. Facts alone make for very austere reading and it is reliant on the biographer to decide what counts for evidence and what fictional “facts” will give the story credibility. Equally difficult is obtaining the information needed to complete a life.

Information on Victorian women is generally less prevalent than information on Victorian men. Until it was legally required, the births of women were often not even registered; genealogists relying on baptism records instead for evidence of births, but these are also frequently non-existent. Neither Marion’s birth in Belfast, nor her elder sister’s appear to have been recorded, or otherwise the records have been lost in the Irish uprising of 1921, however her brother’s birth in Belfast is documented.

Benton also notes that because new data is continuously becoming available, through new resource based sites, the “biographer’s judgements are always provisional, their cases are never closed” because “History is never final... The accounts of their subjects are always open to revision” (2015, chapter 3, n.p.) as sites such as Trove and The National Archives release new data bases.

The difficulty in researching written evidence in a colony like New South Wales in the 1800s was the level of literacy in the population. In 1841 three quarters of the immigrants to NSW came from Ireland and were mainly agricultural labourers or domestic servants, which indicated that literacy levels were quite low with only 60.2% of the population being able to read and write to some level of proficiency (Richards 1999, p. 347). Once they

arrived in Australia the distances between settlements and the ensuing lack of schools meant that a large number of this population and their progeny read and wrote only in the most basic way, often only to sign their name. When attending churches, courthouses or police stations to register births or deaths, the informant, on being asked to provide factual data probably gave the best information they could, from memory, but there was no way of checking for accuracy as family in Ireland were a lifetime away. As a result, our current *Registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages* are filled with half-truths, which because of their formalisation and perceived officiality, are accepted as full truths.

Having obtained over one hundred different certificates from registries in four states for various descendants of the Large, Leathem and Wrixon families, I would suggest there are discrepancies and false information, even if only minor, on at least 40 per cent of those documents. In one family, for example, the Doherty family, records for Mrs Helen Doherty (Nellie), being the younger daughter of Marion Leathem, register four different dates and places of marriage for her marriage to her second husband Thomas, as stated on the birth certificates of four of their ten children. The information on all these birth certificates was provided by Thomas Doherty, so it is assumed he either had a poor memory for dates, or that perhaps after all there had been no marriage and he was making up a date close to when the marriage should have happened to ensure the children were not regarded as bastards. Or perhaps, he simply could not remember or was not able to read enough to check if the dates were recorded properly. My sense of drama and a good story wants the latter, my sense of reason suggests the former.

Because all documents were handwritten, there is the added problem of deciphering nineteenth century handwriting and terminology, when it is being searched and added to modern data bases. Mistakes occur with even the most diligent transcribing and once information is recorded officially, it becomes the truth, whether in fact it is or not. Mistakes occur in even more modern documents, for example, I have two different death certificates for

my father who died in 1996, due to a mistake by the doctor on his medical records.

Journalist Julie Wheelwright (2014) notes that even more recent records of highly documented public figures are subject to the bias by the “official” people recording the details. She reflects that “just as thinking laterally about sources is important, so too is conducting what might be described as an ‘internal check’ of one’s subjectivity” (Wheelwright 2014, p. 566). However Dirk Eitzen says that “popular audiences... are not particularly interested either in the complexity of the past or in explaining it. What they want more than anything... is a powerful emotional experience” (1995, p. 2), where the truth is often blurred in favour of creating a more riveting story with little regard as to whether facts are accurately portrayed.

Once something is written down, it has the potential to become the truth, simply because it is the only documented record of an event, or the most detailed written record of an event. In historical fiction, the presentation of details or documents of an era has the capacity to enhance the legitimacy of an event. Richard Carroll in his article ‘The trouble with history and fiction’ claims “This form of writing, through its attention to the detail of minor events, was better at highlighting the social aspects than the greater moments of history” (2011, n.p.). The best intentions to be factual often fail through no fault of the researcher, but because of what is retained in our archives as historical truth.

Similarly, Wilson writes the

Living history novel engages in this past present dialectic in an overt manner, by consistently concluding the narrative in the present, where characters can use their experience of the past to contemplate the parameters of possibility of their own subjectivity (2011, p. 190).

This sense of 'othering' history tends to "endorse the maturation of the protagonist into a sense of selfhood and implies that the present offers a progression from the past" (Wilson 2011, p. 224).

In this same way, Atwood claims "Fiction is where individual memory and experience and collective memory and experience come together, in greater or lesser proportions" (1998, p. 1504). To write the story of Marion Leathem I was obliged to use whatever facts or fiction were available to tell her life as well as I could. Margaret Atwood when writing *Alias Grace* (1998) decided that "when there was a solid fact, I could not alter it.....but in the parts left unexplained – the gaps left unfilled – I was free to invent" (1998, pp. 1504). The invention of Marion's life came from the everyday I had glimpsed in the letters and journals of others, the little things like "... how to clean a chamber pot, what footgear would have been worn in winter, the origin of quilting pattern names, and how to store parsnips" (Atwood 1998, p. 1514). The ordinary adds credibility more than the sensational; why else would you write trivia if it is not true? It has no significance to the story except to show what was really happening around the subject and the event. It gives legitimacy to the bigger story.

In historical research, hard work and serendipity is addictive. As the facts fall into place to complete a scene or provide a spectacular revelation, there is an urge to make the story fit the facts, especially in the drought phases where actual documentary evidence is scarce. There is also a tendency to flaunt what has been discovered in the research, to justify to the reader and the self the effort which has gone into the research. Honouring what is true is manna to the writers' sense of history but constructing a credible, conceivably accurate scenario from a melded combination of the known truths and the intuitive truths is what makes the story live.

The use of newspaper and periodical archives was pivotal in the investigation of Marion's life mainly because they were the most direct source of information on what was happening around her in Molong. As an

isolated town in the Central West of New South Wales, news of what was happening around the country and overseas had been only available through the major capital city periodicals which were often weeks out of date by the time they reached Molong. *The Molong Express* as Molong's first newspaper and regular source of news was widely welcomed in Molong and the outlying communities.

The last editor of *The Molong Express* before the current regime, Norm Bloomfield, had worked at *The Express* before becoming the proprietor and was a contemporary of Charles Leathem, Marion's son, the last Leathem proprietor. He has compiled a book (Bloomfield 1985), which was released on the occasion of Molong's 150th anniversary and "traces the history of the early days of Molong (prior to the turn of the century) as reported in in *The Molong Express* at the time" (Bloomfield 1985, p.3).

His compilation provides proof on the importance of the newspaper to the community, especially when major events were unfolding in the colony and the only version locals had of the event was their editor's words. Bloomfield talks about the years when Australia was "finding its feet", noting "it was an era when Federation was under consideration, but when the colonies were still independent and conducted their own affairs without consideration for the needs of the other Colonies in Australia" (Bloomfield 1985, p. 3). He highlights the difficulties of communication in the bush and how the newspaper was used by readers to keep abreast of what friends and family were doing, even if distances or circumstances kept them apart. He acknowledges that the newspaper was a reflection of the editors' and readers' opinions and understanding of their local community. Bloomfield cites an 1890s copy of *The Molong Express* which boldly states, "a newspaper is a window through which men look out on the world. A newspaper keeps pace with history, and records it. It is an unfolding encyclopaedia, an unbound book, forever issuing and never finishing" (cited in Bloomfield 1985, p. 3). Marion's commercial acumen is then manifested in

the footnote, “Never fail to take, and pay for, your local paper” (cited in Bloomfield 1985, p. 4).

The Molong Express provided by far the greatest insight into the character of Marion Leathem, generally through little inserts which were often headed, “something of us” or “about ourselves” when births, deaths, marriages and items of family interest were mentioned in amongst the news. After all, Marion’s family were pioneers of the Molong district and her children and their descendants, as they grew, were involved in being part of the news as well as part of the newspaper reporting process. There are for example, stories of her son’s shooting accident when a cadet at the time of the Boer War as well as letters from her grandson Wally who was a soldier in France and in the camps on Salisbury Plain which offer firsthand accounts of the conditions for World War One troops.

The practice of using *Trove* for archival newspaper research is in stark contrast to my early days of writing *Printer’s Ink* when newspapers were only available on microfiche, at the State Library. With this new vast digital resource, “in literary history, old questions can be asked again and new answers discovered because we no longer need to rely upon what [Hasluck] been perceived as representative examples of print culture to understand the past” (Kilner 2014, p. 2). The Director of AustLit, Kerry Kilner stated that as well as being a valuable resource of what was happening at any given time, archived print media creates “a map of the reading habits of Australians in the nineteenth century”, showing us what was actually being read at the time of the research (Kilner 2014, p. 2).

As archival newspapers were my primary resource, besides *The Molong Express Advertiser* (1887- 1954) I referred to *The Gundagai Times* and *Tumut, Adelong, and Murrumbidgee District Advertiser* (1868-1931), a newspaper on which Henry Leathem, Marion’s husband, worked and which was owned by Marion’s brother in law, James Baker Elworthy, and the *Molong Argus*, an opposition newspaper to *The Molong Express* set up by

the local member Dr Andrew Ross in 1900. The entire span of The Molong Express newspaper is not available and inevitably the most crucial transitions in Marion's life, which I most wanted to access, are not covered by retained copies of her own papers. Those which are available provide direction for the authoritative voice of the "Mrs. M. Leathem, Editor and Proprietress" (The Molong Express 1887- 1954). Where these archives were not available, I relied instead on information from birth, death and marriage certificates and other sources listed above to determine what may have been happening around Marion, around Molong and around the world to create the composite character of "Printer's Ink".

The Molong Historical Society, a valuable source of information on the district in general, runs the Molong Museum. Catherine McKenzie their research officer was able to assist with general information on Molong and the paper, but did not have the conclusive research I was hoping to find on either the Leathem family or *The Molong Express*. They were able to assist me with local publications however which provided an overview of the community in which Marion lived.

Similarly, the Tumut Historical Society houses several publications I used in research for the area and provided photos of Dr Large's grave in the Pioneer's Cemetery. The Museum at Gundagai, a run down, dusty treasure-packed warehouse of old and varied items, manned by elderly volunteers, was instrumental in helping me find some stories about the residents of that town, especially after the flood in 1852 (O'Keefe et al. 2002). The storytellers of the museum took me on an oral history tour and we walked through the spaces and looked at the exhibits, each with a memory and each with a story. The Wagga Wagga Historical Society provided the early links with Betty Elworthy and photos of "Chillingly" where Marion's mother ran her school in Kincaid Street.

One of my earliest preconceptions of Marion's life was of her children sleeping upstairs in The Molong Express building, while Marion worked away

downstairs with the printing press chugging out the copies of the paper – I suppose I had an idea of the steady rhythm of the press soothing the children to sleep and this notion stayed with me as a predominant image as I started to research the book. I have been unable to confirm the type of press Marion used but I believe it may have been an “Albion” from Wimbles where Marion got her printing supplies. Henry Parkes also used an Albion at *The Empire* (Walker 1976), where Henry Leathem did his apprenticeship.

Curator Des Barrett set up a demonstration for me on one of the Sydney Powerhouse Museum’s working Albion presses, which is housed at the Meadowbank TAFE where printmaker Rew Hanks teaches classes on the beautifully restored and intricately detailed printing press. I was disappointed that the machine was virtually silent, having no mechanical parts: it was all printed and moved by hand, more of a press and release action, with the pages being printed one at a time and one side at a time and then taken out and dried, before being printed on the reverse.

The silence of the machine dispelled all the notions I had of the chugging, thumping monster in the downstairs Express office. However watching the machine in action let it deliver a new range of story possibilities. The sheer repetitious and tedious nature of printing the paper by hand gave me an even greater reverence for the newspaper and had me wondering how such a large machine was carried all the way over the dirt and rough roads of the Blue Mountains. So, although I did lose one image to reality, I was able to create another opportunity to write a letter from Marion to her parents where she talks about the delivery of the machine to their little hamlet and the excitement it would have caused in the town.

Lucy Neave writes, “there is a mental movement on the part of the writer between the exterior world, and their interior worlds” (2012, p. 7). Neave suggests writing is a relatively complex “theoretical approach” (2012, p. 8). Revision, experimentation, and ‘reflexively exploring’ (Pace 2012) the writer’s personal experience and reaction throughout the research are necessary to

write biographical fiction, for like Neave, I believe it is not possible to completely separate the 'real world' and the imaginary worlds of the writer's mind (Neave 2012, p. 4). However, Steven Pace suggests that autoethnographers "explore their personal experiences and their interactions with others as a way of achieving wider cultural, political or social understanding" (Pace 2012, p. 2). As both research and the unconscious mind impact on the final storyline, compromise is inevitable as the preconceived beliefs and intentions of the original project dissolve under the weight of the practice and the research.

My experience with the Albion was one of the many unreal truths that I had conceived of Marion and her life. What I had previously thought true often succumbed under the weight of the research and the uncovered evidence. But as each preconception fell, it was inevitably replaced by a more salient fact or idea which enabled me to build more authentically on the story.

5. The Newspaper Men – and Women

Walker notes of old broadsheet newspapers such as *The Morning Express* that "to the modern reader the columnar walls of small type unbroken by crossheads, the long paragraphs, the frequently long-winded style, of nineteenth-century newspapers bear a forbidding aspect" (1976, p. 225). One certainly had to respect the compositors working with such small type and large pages and the accuracy of their trade, for reading the pages was difficult enough, let alone setting the type. Deciphering pages of microfiche was the most difficult of all the research tasks and I had great empathy with Marion for proofreading this massive paper before each printing – and I'm sure she did.

Even being as diligent as possible, I had to skip the pages of advertisements and the long diatribes on politics of which Marion and her editors were so fond, especially on the subject of Sir Henry Parkes, for whom she seemed to have a particular dislike. This warranted more research as a copy of *The*

Molong Express was found amongst the effects of Sir Henry Parkes on his death, which Marion apparently used as publicity for her newspaper.

Besides Marion only three other women were registered as newspaper Proprietresses in Australia from 1863-1893, though from 1894 to 1899 there were sixteen papers run by women (Walker 1976, p. 241). From 1863-1893 as well as Marion Leathem, the four included Mrs Doyle of Carcoar (*Carcoar Mary*), Mrs Falls (*Maitland Mercury* 1870-3) and Mrs D JG Jones (*The Pastoral Times* 1876—80) (Walker 1976, p. 241). I wondered if there was any camaraderie between these women as quite often *The Molong Express* was quoted in the *Maitland Mercury*, but I was unable to locate copies of the other papers.

“In the colony, the usual manner in which women acquired ownership was by widowhood” (Walker 1976, p. 241) and this was the case with Marion, “..but it was the Married Women’s Property Act of 1893 (ALII 2015) which enabled a married woman to hold property and enter contracts as a feme-sole check which removed the restraints to female ownership” (Walker 1976, p. 241). He notes with the exception of Louisa Lawson, “early newspapers did little to cater for a special women’s readership...” (Walker 1976, p. 243) and it was left to women journalists and Proprietresses such as those mentioned above to write for this minority.

6. Freedom through the Feminist Prism: Adding to our Ability to See

For some, feminism is a theory or ideology about unequal and oppressive gender relations. For most feminists, however, feminism is a political practice – a desire to change the world.

(Bulbeck 2015, n.p.)

In theory, according to Professor Chilla Bulbeck, “there were no feminists prior to the invention of the term feminism – in France, in the early 1890s”, however women have struggled for equality and greater participation “in spheres reserved for men in every nation, dating back at least to 620BCE” (2015, n.p.). The term feminism emerged as a synonym for women’s emancipation in every continent, but particularly in “colonised countries linked with the struggle for freedom from the European colonial yoke” (Bulbeck 2015, n.p.).

“Printer’s Ink” is not intended to specifically investigate the areas of feminism in relation to women of Marion’s generation, nor is this exegesis, however some issues relating to feminism overlap Marion’s story, and I address these as follows.

From my reading of her newspapers, I do not think Marion Leathem thought of herself as a feminist or suffragette. I believe she felt very much the equal of anyone, male or female. She had come from a family where her mother’s school contributed more to the family income than her father’s medical practice. Although joint ownership of the newspaper was something she inherited on the death of her husband, she willingly bought out her brother in law very quickly when he failed to run the newspaper as she believed it should be run and managed it as sole Proprietress until her death.

Marion’s role was I believe adopted initially through necessity but there is no doubt she enjoyed her position of power and her “preaching pulpit” to pass judgment on her town and the affairs of her country. This is evident with her position as “Proprietress” emblazoned on every edition as well as the *Molong Express* building itself. In her editorials, Marion was similarly supportive of women and men in general when conveying the news, but equally quick to condemn either if they dropped their standards, particularly in public.

In the surviving copies of *The Molong Express* there is no indication of any propensity towards matters related to the Suffragette movement, none the

less, Marion never re-married after her husband died even though she was only 36 when this happened in 1879. I do not know if she ever had any suitors, or if she preferred to remain single from choice. *The Married Women's Property Act of 1893* would have allowed Marion to retain her own newspaper in her own right; however she was 52 when this came about, so I cannot comment if that was a factor in her remaining single. With six children under the age of 10 when she took on the role, a full time job and staff to manage, perhaps she was just too tired to have any other interests in her life. Or perhaps her love for Henry Leathem was so strong there was no room for any other love.

It is noteworthy however to see Marion Leathem citing the launch of the feminist magazine, *The Dawn* as an interesting publication in *The Molong Express* and she recommends it to her readers:

...one of the neatest looking, most smartly written papers – of the kind that have yet to be published in the Australian colonies.....
The publication very creditably supplies what has long been a desideratum to Australian women...

(*The Molong Express*, May 1888)

Louisa Lawson with the launch of *The Dawn* (Lawson 1990) recognised the role of women in that era and published stories suited to their situations, when books and magazines in the colony were very limited, especially for women. Louisa Lawson wrote “there has hitherto been no trumpet through which the concentrated voices of womankind could publish their grievances and their opinions” (Benjamin 2015). *The Dawn* had a robust feminist standpoint, discussing items such as women's legal rights, domestic violence and of course the right to vote. After the 1888 mention of *The Dawn*, I found no other reference in the surviving copies of *The Molong Express* to Louisa Lawson or her publication. However, Marion also had contact with other newspapers run solely by women; this is addressed later in this exegesis.

7. Ghosting the Self : The Absent Presence of the Subject and the Biographical Inter-Relationship

**My ghost, my self, my most intimate stranger
Standing beneath these lyric trees
With your one wineglassful of morning
Snatched from the rushing galaxies**

**Bright-haired and satin-lipped you offer
The youth I shall not taste again.
I know, I bear to know, your future
Unlooked-for love, undreamed-of pain.**

**(Gwen Harwood, *In Brisbane*, cited in
Wallace-Crabbe 1969)**

Leon Edel, pondering the “central puzzle of biography” argues that “every life takes its own form and a biographer must find the ideal and unique literary form that will express it” (cited in Novarr 1986, p. 165). Allen Hibbard on the other hand says that “we expect biographers to deliver accurate, coherent stories of their subjects” through accumulated facts and accounts of their achievements to “help us understand what made the person tick” (2006, p. 19). Theoretically, there is no correct treatment for any biography, for each narrative is reliant on multiple and diverse influences. These include, but are not limited to, the biographer’s dynamics, the subject’s area of interest to the biographer and the ability to tell the story in the best possible way to a wide audience.

Hibbard stresses that “the presence of the biographer – the ‘I’, if you will – is a tricky matter. Just how much can or should authors assert their presence?” Because biography requires the implication of two different “yet related” narrative strands to tell the story of a life, the ghost of the author

inhibits the voice of the subject and vice versa. “Through the process, the relationship between the biographer and subject becomes particularly tight, producing intense identification, admiration, disgust, or aspects of all of these other emotions” (Hibbard 2006, p. 19).

Brien adds that biography is “the site of considerable experimentation” (2014, p. 3) where biographers use a multitude of forms and methodology to capture the lives they are trying to recreate. She cites Foucault’s (1978) article, “I, Pierre Riviere”, which she says exposed “the process by which biographies are shaped and filtered through their authors’ subjectivities” (cited in Brien 2014, p. 3). This addresses the varied concepts of biographical content and the ways of telling the story of a life, suggesting that the author best portrays the subject’s life through the individual application of narration specific to the subject.

Correspondingly, Hecq examines the Freudian concept of writing as “communication with the absent” and discusses the psychoanalytic concept of the “invisible” analyst, behind the analysand as a tool for transference in session (Hecq 2009a, p. 2). This creates an invisible presence, the “absent present” of the writer and reader relationship, or in the case of “Printer’s Ink”, the absent subject and the present author, or the subject and biographer combination where the presence of the subject is not necessary. As Hecq says, “In writing, no-one is present. The potential and anonymous reader is absent by definition – she might as well be dead” (Hecq 2009, p. 3). And though Marion is also dead, as the evidence and stories of my research started to accrue in my mind, I was overcome with a connection to Marion Leathem and her haunting presence in my writing. “Writing fashions this dimension of absence while it re-presents – while it renders present through imaginary and symbolic operations” (Hecq 2009 pp.3) and the heartbeat of Marion Leathem could be felt pulsing through my fingertips as I wrote. In a similar way, Grenville spoke of her early research into Solomon Wiseman on whom she based her character William Thornhill, “He was so alive ... I could hear him breathe, feel the heat of his body ...” (Grenville 2006, p. 23), the

character coming alive as she gathered her research and the facts began to present as a foundation for her story.

Once the connection with my subject was established, the absent subject of the living Marion Leathem asserted herself, ghost-like into my writing. I was aware of the research accelerating exponentially, almost revealing itself, as if to accommodate the growing presence of the subject by divulging facts and symbologies in every facet of my investigation. It became apparent that the more present the writer is to the diversities of her subject, the more varied and available the research becomes. As Hecq asserts, to the reader, “The text alone creates this quasi-presence or quasi-absence, much as the analyst opens up a space of quasi presence/absence for the analysand” (2009, p. 3). While I was writing Marion’s letters through the prism of her researched life, I found the subject too, was present, for I found the thoughts flowing onto the page as she/I poured out her stories, and were not always consciously directed by me as the author. “The ghost’s disruption of temporal and spatial boundaries” (Hecq 2009, p. 4) dictating the pages of her life story, through both my research and her words, revealed more of the character than I actually knew that I knew. Her presence infiltrated my pen. As Labudova notes on Derrida’s ‘phenomenological conception of spectrality’ (Derrida, 2012) page or the mastery of the present, the figure of the ghost, “appropriates the absence (meant as a disturbance of my presence) and consigns it to an other, setting up a necessarily imperfect symmetry” (Sellei & Labudova, 2013 pp.126) that produces this sense of haunting.

8. Family History Research: What Can be Found in Closets

Who owns the past? In a free society, everyone. It is a magic pudding belonging to anyone who wants to cut themselves a slice, from legend manufacturers through

novelists looking for ready-made plots, to interest groups out to extend their influences.

(Inga Clendinnen, *The History Question*, 2006)

Because the initial historical research had been auspicious, I felt I had Marion on my side as my ghost-writer – if not my research assistant on her life. I made enquiries to and quickly received information from the organisations I approached and the information was generally useful and in line with my findings. The Wagga Wagga Historical Society provided me with some pages from *Devon to Down Under* (c 1985) where Bettie Elworthy had researched the Large family as part of her own family history. Bettie Elworthy wrote that Marion's first child, Alice was actually a twin – with a sister named Grace, but that Grace had died in infancy (Elworthy c 1985, p. 73).

My family were unaware of this twin, but as there was so much research in the Elworthy book, we assumed Elworthy was correct and this was a fact which had not been passed down our own family line. The Department of Births, Deaths and Marriages eventually provided the answer; Grace Leathem was in fact a cousin of Alice's, born within weeks of her birth but dying aged seven months.

One mistake such as this, where the researcher had made an assumption or did not check the facts correctly, or was just careless in transcription, undermines confidence in all the rest of the research they have provided. Immediately the entire document was under suspicion, as was every other document I had been given.

When I eventually met Elworthy in July 2008, she seemed reluctant to accept that Marion Leathem did not have a daughter named Grace and I learned then how attached to one's research it is possible to become. This 'fact' was forever stored in the covers of a well-researched book and was therefore a 'truth' and changing that small detail, insignificant though it was, made me

start to appreciate the enormous amount of misinformation available online, particularly in family history websites because someone has made a fact fit in with their story. The links on MyHeritage.com and Ancestry.com now compound the error on so many individual websites that it is almost impossible to correct and Grace Leathem forever remains a ghostly but false twin to Alice Leathem, the first of many Unreal Truths in my story.

Bettie Elworthy's research was invaluable however, for plotting the life of Marion's younger sister Henrietta and her husband James. Besides James Elworthy being a catalyst for Marion meeting her husband Henry, he became a correspondent in "Printer's Ink" and a source of mentorship to Marion in the struggling days after her husband died and she had disagreement with Henry's brother over the running of *The Molong Express*. The following article appeared in the *Gundagai Times and Tumut Advertiser* when Marion finally wrested control of the Express from her brother in law.

By the last issue of the Molong Express we see that paper has changed hands, and is now the sole property of Mrs H. V. Leathem, to whom all moneys due to the concern are to be paid.

We also see that the paper has reverted to its former size and style, and the absence of its column of religion and riddle is a noticeable feature. It is now more like a newspaper, which must take place under the guidance of an experienced manager.

(The Gundagai Times Adelong and Tumut, Adelong and Murrumbidgee District Advertiser, 26 September 1882)

The ties of family can be stronger than the reality, and this helped me see the sturdiness of the family connections as I wrote Marion's letters.

As my re-searching for statistics progressed very slowly over the microfiche reader, I started to realise the enormity of the task I had set myself. Like Grenville, "I imagined that his family history business would be tidy: a matter

of stepping from one fact to another” (Grenville 2006, p. 31) but instead there was a minefield of misinformation, wrong dates, misspelled names and inconsistencies as errors compounded on the errors and were passed down the generational lines as reality.

The family history research for Marion and her extended family was much more complex and time consuming than any other line of research, but also quite essential for seeing how all the pieces finally fit together. The inevitable cross overs of family members through the generations helped to cement the genealogy and explained the generational shifts of loyalty, inheritance and estrangements.

In writing about her own family research, Kon-yu notes how difficult it is to find archival information in particular about “women born in previous generations” (2010, p. 3). Referencing Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1989) she cites how the absence of women recording history accounts for their absence from historical documents and “contributed to their silence, or misrepresentation in literature” (Kon-yu 2010, p. 3). Likewise, McClanahan suggests a family history memoir is more about the “larger story you discover through the information, a story that in some way connects to your own” (2013, n.p.). She believes that talking back to the retrieved enquiry lets your reader “overhear your thoughts” (McClanahan 2013, n.p.) as you uncover the unclear aspects of your research, for the process of research into family history is “a narrative in and of itself” (McClanahan 2013, n.p.).

As I realised my lack of evidence around some critical elements of Marion’s life, I reluctantly embraced the concept of ‘memoir’ mentality for selected aspects of my writing. I had wrongly thought, as Thi Minh-HaTrinh asserts, “that a common misconception of history” (Kon-yu 2010, p. 10) is that “the Past, unrelated to the Present and the Future, is lying there in its entirety, waiting to be revealed and related” (Trinh 1989 p. 120). But as Kon-Yu reminds us,

the past is never separate from the present, and texts that suggest as much may intimate that these kinds of histories can be found, if we have the right tools to excavate them. They do not take into account the complex relationship between the past and the present, and often do not question the fictional structures that perpetuate such myths (Kon-yu 2010, p. 10).

Finding the real past was difficult enough but finding the 'real' truth would prove to be even harder.

9. The Experiential Way – Research for the Exegesis

The relationship between characters and their creators is symbiotic. An author's life influences his characters and a character's development influences the author. We may write about things we have never experienced directly, but as we write them, we experience in sensory and emotional detail, and they become real and merge with our real memories. The alchemy that you hope will move your audiences must first move you, so perhaps you end up having more than your fair share of emotion

(Macrobert 2012, p. 356)

Smith and Dean suggest that practice led research and research led practice “can develop unique processes for creative works and for research” with these interwoven processes acting as “an iterative cyclic web” (Smith & Dean 2009, p. 2) or combined process of the two parts. Hecq questions the validity of this seemingly binary process; where practice led research “mobilises the unconscious, perception, pre-language and language” which allows creative writing to be a way of research which “triangulates two

seemingly mutually exclusive discourses encompassing (tacit) knowing and (explicit) knowledge” (Hecq 2012, p. 2). One recognises the reality of the unconscious whilst the other reflects the importance of the rational and critical process of writing the artefact.

The epistemological foundations for “Printer’s Ink” were set firmly in my experiential research. My evolving interpretation of that research, as the information changed and updated frequently over the duration of the candidature, meant the character of Marion Leathem did not remain static at any stage of the process. The artefact needed to adapt to this change to accommodate new research, new understanding or new conflicts in the writing, all of these generating themselves as different forms of truths, both fictional and evidentiary.

As Goodall says of writing fiction, “...I felt a sense of liberation from the constraints of professional research” as she was able to compile her data with no accountability for any fabrications or omissions, “quite promiscuously, in a fashion determined entirely by the requirements of the storyline” (Smith & Dean 2009, p. 200). For as long as the narrative has a convincing storyline and a believable character, the story can be told as I feel it should be told – the character after all is dead. The only remaining truth is what I am writing.

I found as well as writing in Marion’s hand, I was experiencing her life, or a parallel of her life the further we journeyed together. As Marion stumbled on work projects, so did I. As Marion battled with family issues, children, grandchildren, ailing parents and her own health, so did I. My problems became Marion’s and Marion’s became mine. The dual paths we were travelling, though one hundred and fifty years apart, were so closely entwined I was often aware of our similarities, our humanness and our shared predicaments. It was her humanness which drew me to her and the more I came to know Marion through the research and the evolving secrets of her life, the more empathy I had with her.

Gandolfo suggests, "If as many argue, fiction makes readers more empathetic, it is because writers have created believable worlds that readers can inhabit". She believes that this requires the writer to inhabit the bodies or personas of their characters themselves to learn and become as much like their character as possible, even if this requires the writer "spending many years in very dark places" (Gandolfo 2014, p. 1) as they struggle with the imposed entity. This echoes Atticus Finch's advice that, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... Until you climb into his skin and walk around in it (sic)." (Lee 2004, p. 37). It seemed that to truthfully be in Marion's skin I had to go where she had lived, see the house where she grew up, visit the country of her birth, understand her financial troubles and read the newspaper she had written. I had to experience her life – albeit a century later and in a far more supportive society but still as a woman of many facets, living her life as fully and as well as she could.

As previously noted, experiential research was undertaken to Ireland, the country of Marion's birth, and to all the towns of Marion's life; Gundagai, Tumut, Adelong, Wagga Wagga, Orange, Melbourne and of course Molong. In each town, I found a little more of Marion's foundations. Each location gave me more of a connection with the woman for it is impossible to stand on the pathway of the house where Marion once lived and not see what she would have seen about her. The river below, the huge gums overhead and the passers-by doffing their hats and bidding her "good morning Miss Large" were all still there, it was just a matter of knowing how to look. Her presence was still possibly a shadow moving swiftly across the wall or a flash of colour through a doorway and I looked to catch a glimpse of her from the corner of my eye as I imagined she and Henry full of excitement about their move to Molong to open their own newspaper.

Molong, "the Wiradjuri people's 'Place of Many Rocks' " (Molong 2015) is a town of around 2,000 people, first settled by Europeans in the 1820s. It is 34 kilometres east of Orange in Central West New South Wales. "The

Molong Creek formed part of the 'limit of location', the boundary of the nineteen counties, beyond which it was illegal to settle" (Molong 2015). Copper was mined there in the 1840s and gold was first discovered in Australia at Ophir just a few miles away. At its peak the wide streets would have been filled with the hoof beats of Cobb and Co. coaches as they brought visitors to the town; it was on a Cobb and Co. coach that Henry Leathem travelled to Molong to set up the first newspaper and on the same coach that Marion would have travelled with her five small children for several days to reach the same destination after selling up their possessions in Gundagai before the move.

Even though Marion was an infant when she left Ireland, the indelible imprint of Irish history stayed in her blood, as did her connection with her old country. In Ireland, I walked the streets of Dublin looking for the houses where Marion's family had resided and walked the corridors of Trinity College where Henry Wrixon studied or read in that magnificent library with Oscar Wilde, Samuel Beckett and Bram Stoker.

I found the town of Killiney – not Killarney – but a small town on the east coast of Ireland, often compared locally to the Bay of Naples (NTDA 2014), not far from Dublin which is now the quarters of embassies and consulates and home to Bono, Enya and Van Morrison (NTDA 2014). This town, sitting grandly above the sea, is where Arthur Wrixon went to convalesce and die. Seeing the grandeur of this place in contrast to the otherwise poor towns of Ireland, I could see the power and money this family had.

In Cork, I found Marion's family seat (NUI Galway 2011). The Wrixons had been sheriffs and magistrates in this county for a very long time and Gerald Wrixon was at the time chancellor of Cork University. The castles of Blossomfort and Fermoy are still holdings of the Wrixon descendants though their Protestantism made them aliens to the locals who were disparaging when asked about them. But it was on the dock at Cobh, formerly Queenstown (Coakley 2007), where the majority of ships departed for

Australia and not far from where the Lusitania was sunk, that I felt the true significance of boarding a ship for the other end of the earth and leaving all that was known and loved behind. The Cobh dock has been turned into an historical site for families researching the many thousands of immigrants who left Ireland by this port. The site recounts the family stories and has mementos of the gifts they took with them; locks of hair, miniatures, pebbles, cooking pots and handkerchiefs, to remind them of the families they would probably never see again (Coakley 2007).

This was not getting aboard an aircraft to travel for twenty-four hours to Australia. This was the last farewell – the last sight of families and the hellish trepidation of four months on a small, wooden ship on the violent seas to a backward land only recently colonised, so far away. The bravery of a woman to take her three children, aged respectively two years, one year and two months onto a ship for six months to face the perils of sea travel, the boredom and monotony and the proximity of so many immigrants was truly inspiring and gave me a sense of the substance of Mary Ann (Wrixon) Large and the qualities she would have passed down to her daughters.

The Australian Association of Medical Pioneers (Geelong Hospital Library), and the Royal College of Surgeons, provided background on Dr Large and his associations with hospitals in NSW and much information of what life was like for a doctor and surgeon, sadly often echoing *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney* (Henry Handel Richardson 1930) and *Life and Death in the Age of Sail* (Haines 2003), which discusses the role of Surgeon Superintendents during the voyages to Australia.

All of these experiences have provided background colour and structural underpinning for the story and have helped set the scene of the life of Marion Leathem. Gathering these facts and mixing them with history, family records and intuition born from family reminiscences, formed early dough I would knead and reshape continually through the writing of “Printer’s Ink”, moulding the substance of Marion Leathem into a formidable woman of letters.

Pulling these relived facts and revisited locations into the perceived realities of the story necessitated authorial imagination rather than objective writing. Like Brien I believe that “much may be gained from using empathetic strategies to produce biographies that are powerful narratives of lived experience” (Nelson & De Matos 2015b, p. 5). For as Haebich argues, the experience of retracing the character’s steps “actively encourages writing that is imaginative, subjective and ambiguous” (Nelson & De Matos 2015b, p. 5) and resonates more deeply in the writer’s mind than any other research, for the writer has touched the character on the shoulder as they passed each other in their travel. Or as Brien describes it, “the facts formed a line of buoys in the sea of my own imagination” (Nelson & De Matos 2015, p. 5), allowing the many points of the story to come together under the single harmonious canopy of fact and imagination.

10. Understanding the Process

**One must go all the way to beyond
the possibilities of the instrument. But
unconsciously.
We are here to lose.**

(L'ange au secret)

**(Hélène Cixous - Portrait of writing
Writing-thinking, 1976, p. 81)**

In this section I discuss how the prolonged and dynamic process of researching Marion generated a transmutation with her character. The process of trying to understand what I didn’t understand about Marion created a sense of being her therapist, or her sometimes being mine, as I looked at what I was writing about her and her /my reactions to the situations in the story’s plot. Although these phenomena initially stalled the writing, the

process ultimately let me identify holistically with her character by observing her maturation through the prism of my own inner gaze.

Josie Arnold (2008) compares the supervisor-candidate role of the PhD with the therapist/analysand relationship of psychotherapy. She claims “therapy arises from the analysand” (Arnold 2008, p. 76), which parallels the evolving relationship I had with Marion. It became apparent mid-candidature that I was encountering transitions which were best described as transference and countertransference with Marion. These interfered greatly with the writing process and the continuing development of the artefact. Transitions generally:-

...relate to periods when either or both patient and analyst begin to look at a constellation of experiences or even what are traditionally termed symptoms in a different way. Needs begin to be seen as demands; self-criticism begins to be seen as related to unrealistic or perhaps even grandiose fantasies about the self; patient or analyst begins to see the ways that the analysis itself has been assaulted by destructive trends (Cooper 2011, p. 1).

As further explanation, in *Transference and Projection* (Grant 2002) Grant and Crawley subtitle their work, “mirrors to the self” which they say “captures the essence of why transference and projection are such important phenomena in psychotherapy” because it is through these “unconscious processes” that the “inner world of the client can be glimpsed and the structure of the self partially revealed” (Grant 2002, p. xv).

In a similar vein, Cooper (2011, p. 1) discusses the conflict and interruption of transference and countertransference incidences in psychoanalysis and clinical work and their ability to facilitate “transition, disruption, repair and growth” for both the patient and the analyst. Cooper says our language is too limiting to discuss the actual concept of these transitions effectively, because they continuously strain under the “burdens of categorization and

dichotomy” (Cooper 2011, p. 2) or what Balint called the “poverty of interpretation” (cited in Cooper 2013, p. 42). Cooper further believes the restrictive terms used in therapy, “such as negative and positive transference, negative and positive countertransference, good and bad objects, and new and old objects” (Cooper 2011, p. 2) limit the progress of analysis by restricting the conversation which may otherwise evolve if the concepts of self and “I” did not limit the thinking of both parties.

Cooper’s (2011) work concerns “the intrapsychic and interpersonal fields” of psychoanalytic work and the analyst’s propensity to become attached to their particular theory to the exclusion of new information or process. He cites Freud’s notes of his treatment of his patient “Herr E”, who confirmed Freud’s theory of patient responses to incidents in their early years. Freud had written to Fleiss, excited at the patient’s response in this manner and also comments how “Herr E” unconsciously provided Freud with a solution to his own “railway phobia” during a session which discovered unearthed fantasies in both the patient and therapist. Freud was enthused that his patient had “demonstrated the truth of his theories” but then had to reassess his theory when he determined that his own depression, during a subsequent session with the same patient, “turned everything upside down” and required putting it together again. Freud was able to “surrender to a new way of thinking and learning about the nature of his developing understanding of the psychoanalytic process” (Cooper 2011, p. 10). This “unconscious conflict” (Cooper 2011, p. 1) is discussed in more detail below, but is mentioned here as these ‘transitions’ underpinned the re-storying of Marion Leathem and the way I chose to deal with her in “Printer’s Ink”.

Locating the family of Marion Leathem’s eldest granddaughter Fanny, who was initially the perceived villain of the story, allowed a connection with the generational product of Marion Leathem’s strict standards of childrearing and housekeeping and was crucial in changing the direction of both the artefact and the exegesis. This crucial connection also indorsed the strength of the female descendants of Marion Leathem and their ability to survive against

adversities such as incest and parental neglect. Uncovering this information also set a pivotal point of change in how these new truths could be addressed when only some of the truths was known, obscured as they were by the intricate layer of lies which had been put in place to disguise them.

The toughness and sharp tongue I cultivated for Marion as part of this process became in my mind a true indication of this woman and I allowed this toughness to colour her letters, particularly in her dealings with errant family members such as Nellie her daughter and in early, now discarded letters to Fanny her granddaughter. As I uncovered some of the truths about what had really happened, as opposed to what I had been told had happened to Fanny, I began to have mixed sentiments on what I was writing.

The Marion who emerged from this mixture of truth, folklore and transference had such strength and rigidity, the writer/creator in me was confronted, intimidated and slightly resentful for not receiving something positive in return for being the writer and chronicler of her life. Sometimes the character is very much like the writer. "The person we have been is now an 'I was', the character from our past. She follows us, but at a distance. And sometimes she can never become a character in one of our books" (Cixous & Calle-Gruber 2003, p. 81) for I found myself actively disliking the persona of Marion, even though she was of my own creation. Something was seriously flawed in my writer's or my personal understanding of what was being written. I had transferred onto Marion all the ill feelings I had accumulated as I learned the truth about the more confronting events, particularly those concerning Fanny. This conveyance was mutating into a character who also disliked her creator. The issues, which evolved around this transference and countertransference, became fundamental in finishing the story.

11. Writerly Challenges: Biography and Why We Write it.

Marion's life needs telling and like Grenville, I want to make that "leap into empathy, into finding 'the other' in" myself (Grenville 2011a, n.p.).

(Murray Journal 2012)

The primary requisite as Marion's biographer was to tell her story with truth and conviction using the available "facts" as milestones and the "possible" as the condiments to season the story. However the transitional "crisis" which had occurred whilst I was researching Marion's life forced me to simultaneously examine my motives for wanting to write her story in the first place and redefine the story I finally wanted to tell. Marion's role as newspaper Proprietress set her plausibly apart from her female contemporaries in her own way. The press was a male dominated domain and I was looking for some basis in her newspaper editorials that would show this quality of determination and the resulting success.

Biography is always about both a timespan of life and a geographical place where that life was lived. Tom Griffiths says of biography, that the "intertwining of history and fiction is a quest for understanding" (2015, p. 17-18) and we do that by categorising people in the time they lived.

Further Griffiths queried, what is it about a particular subject or relative that makes us want to know their story and why do we want to tell it? Similarly, Kate Grenville, in writing about her mother, claimed that the most unusual thing about her mother's life was "that she left a record of it": she "made it very clear that she wanted her story to be told" (Grenville 2015, n.p.).

Grenville says she perceived her mother's notes as "a record of her efforts to understand her life and the world that had shaped it" (2015, n.p.) and as daughter and biographer, this allowed her to tell her mother's story "in its context of time and place so that her individual life should be seen as part of a larger picture" (Grenville 2015, n.p.).

For Grenville believes by deciding to write about people who are “other” in some way, we can expand the reader’s idea of their own selves. “If we can recognise the other in some part of ourselves – perhaps a hidden or unrecognised part – our understanding is deepened” (Grenville 2015, n.p.). Being intrigued by how differing situations bring “out both the glorious and the terrible in people” is irresistible for a writer such as Grenville who has written such diverse biographies as *One Life: My Mother’s Story* (2015), *Lillian’s Story* (1985), *Sarah Thornhill* (2011b), *Dark Places* (2012a) and *The Secret River* (2012). Grenville claims “they cry out to be told in a dramatic form” (2012, n.p.) for they touch us in some deeply personal way.

In nurturing a sense of the veracity of the subject, I wanted to make her live so by committing to an epistolary medium, I engaged my unconscious mind more fully in Marion’s life. Fiction and facts could live side by side in letters if I was writing to honour Marion the woman rather than expose Marion the subject. For as Dr Meenakshi from the University of Delhi commented, “It is more palatable to write another’s story through the imagination because biography works best when it takes its cue from fiction” for “...no life writing is true if it is divested of the creative treatment” (2010). Likewise Anthony Powell wrote:

People think that because a novel’s invented, it isn’t true. Exactly the reverse is the case. Because a novel’s invented, it’s true. Biographies and memoirs can never be wholly true, since they can’t include every conceivable circumstance or what happened, the novel can do that, the novelist lays it down. His decision is binding (Powell 2010, p. 84).

The original intent of the biographic storyline is strongly challenged when it is subjected to the real voice of the character, directed through the prism of the writer’s pen. Keeping Marion’s story aligned with my first draft was consistently challenged, through the ongoing research, with sub plots and false trails of intriguing but ultimately unusable information. Christopher

Mallon writes; “As a technique, the first-person narration also provides a focalisation – a lens through which the reader sees what the narrator observes” (2015, p. 7), but this is highly challenging when the protagonist’s voice allows the story to divert from the main storyline, through the mediums of inquiry and the writer’s emotional environment and ethical responsibilities.

It is possible to spend enormous amounts of precious research time following particular lines of information, even when not necessarily linked to the main story line of the novel, hoping to find a fact or link which would bring the side story into the envelope of the main plot. Often, the research detours provide wonderful and important historical information which seems more interesting and story-worthy than the original plot. The writer’s dilemma is either changing the base story to incorporate the new information, or deleting an entire line of research, for fear of losing control of the story. Kate Grenville discusses a similar problem in how after many years of research for *The Secret River* she realised she had two stories unfolding instead of her original intended novel. “One was a story about settlement – Wiseman and his family and their relationship with the Aboriginal people. The other was a classic revenge-and-romance story” based on his love and marriage to his childhood sweetheart (Grenville 2006, p. 181). Grenville recognised that the first was a “sombre story based on real, tragic events. The second was a lightweight, contrived thing” (Grenville 2006, p. 181) and when she was unable to make the stories work together, she went back to the original intent of her story about white colonisation of the Hawkesbury region (Grenville 2006, pp. 181-83).

In the case of “Printer’s Ink”, Marion’s story was highjacked by the story of Marion’s granddaughter Louisa, nicknamed Fanny. Fanny had in our family history been guilty of allegedly seducing Marion’s son in law, James, and had fallen pregnant, at the same time that his own wife Alice was expecting their third child. Fanny had been staying with Alice and James to assist them as a nanny. Because of this generational certainty and condemnation, I had made Fanny the villain of the plot. Her development in the story, from her

birth to her very young mother (Nellie), her wilfulness as a child, her disobedience, laziness and selfishness as an adolescent until her fall from grace as a young woman, bearing an illegitimate child and then abandoning that same child when she wished to remarry, all made for a satisfactory black sheep who had wreaked havoc on her close knit family. How I enjoyed my role in her condemnation.

Her development in my story was strongly supported by all the family “told” facts of her appalling behaviour and the sad repercussions for her family, particularly her aunt, whose husband had fathered the child. My story had letters from Marion written to various members of her family condemning Fanny, over her life, disapproving of her sloth during her growing years and expressing disbelief and shock at the scandal it had caused the entire family, allowing Marion a reason for a rift between her two daughters, who were both deeply affected by this scandal.

As more research came to light, I became almost obsessed with Fanny’s herstory – what had made this woman so evil when she had been taken in by her aunt – after being deserted by her mother? She remained the focus of research for many months, because I couldn’t find any relevant facts about her early life, until, a notice in *The Molong Express* mentioned Fanny’s parents went to Fremantle on their honeymoon. The long awaited arrival of Fanny’s birth certificate from Fremantle proved she was barely fourteen years old when she gave birth. Immediately the story fell apart. This was not the willowy, wanton seductress without conscience, who had lured a good man to his fate. This was instead a fatherless child, abandoned by her mother at a very early age, passed between her grandmother and aunt and sexually abused by her uncle. That one single piece of evidence effectively derailed the course of the story and nullified all the letters I had written up to and after this event. A whole new line of questioning arose.

My mother, Alice’s granddaughter, when shown this proof, was shocked but still would not think less of her grandfather, whom she adored. The family

story over-rode the truth in her mind. It is this type of research which is most frustrating; the “grand family sagas” of wonderful people and events that until dispelled, unite a family in how it thinks and remembers its history as a communal lie. I recall being told the story of the small child dropped off at the end of the long Dilga driveway, a little lad of four, with a carpet bag and a note pinned to his shirt, trundling down the lane off the Cobb and Co. Coach, to a house and people he didn’t know. This image was far too enticing not to use. The heartlessness of the mother, the cruelty of the mother, the sadness and distress of the child, small Douglas Darcy, who grew up to be my great uncle Doug, known as the adopted child of Alice and James Johnston. What a shame it turned out to be an untruth.

I had once asked my own grandmother, Doug’s elder, adopted sister, what had happened to Doug’s real mother and she simply answered, “well, that’s a sad story” and nothing else was mentioned. When I found out the truth, my grandmother’s words proved true – it was a sad story. But a child interprets a ‘sad story’ meaningfully – the adult inflection on the sadness – and the child had already been conditioned to be on the side of the storyteller and judge those who inflicted the sadness on the family unit. I had unconsciously taken on the persona of the sad child – one of the many instances of transference I experienced during the writing of this book. Jung says “that the very word ‘transference’ is closely akin to ‘projection’ – a phenomenon that cannot possibly be demanded” (Jung 2013, p. 8) and what I was writing was my own projection onto Fanny of her ill treatment of her son.

With Fanny painted as the wanton seductress, and Nellie deserting her daughter when she remarried, Alice had assumed saint like proportions. These were further enhanced in Marion’s letters when Alice adopted Doug. We assumed that Nellie had taken the part of her daughter and neither Nellie nor Fanny were much featured in the family chronicles after the Cobb and Co. coach had left Douglas D’arcy stranded at the bottom of the lane at Dilga. When I found Fanny’s death certificate it showed she had married

Stanley Royce Woolbank, a returned soldier on the 25th April 1921. She died in Sydney in 1971 and the certificate mentioned the names of her three daughters, Gloria, Audrey and Mona. There was no mention of the boy child Douglas D'Arcy.

Through RSVP in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, I was able to contact Fanny's youngest daughter, Mona, who lived in Sydney. When she rang me I said I'd like to meet her, and she responded her eldest sister Gloria would like to meet, too. We met up the following week and formed an instant bond, which has seen us travel some sad but gratifying paths together. Gloria was 89 and Mona 86 when we first met at Mona's house in Sydney. After a few hours of talk, sharing photos and information, it was apparent they knew nothing about their brother but I was left in no doubt of the high esteem in which they held their mother. I decided to tell them about Douglas, who had died ten years before our meeting and we sat in silence while the news settled.

They had been isolated from the rest of their mother's family and had moved to Sydney in 1936 when their mother inherited *The Molong Express* and the entire estate of her Uncle Charles Leathem, who was Marion's eldest son. Fanny had lived with Marion in her declining years and in turn, Charles after his mother's death until he died. Fanny promptly sold the paper and, severing all connections with Molong, moved her family to Stanmore in Sydney and bought a "ham and beef shop" which was to provide an income for the family during the depression. It was a total shock to me that Fanny, whom I thought had disappeared, had inherited the family jewel, *The Molong Express*, which was the mainstay of the family.

Fanny insisted her daughters move from Molong for there they would only "make early marriages or fall pregnant". Gloria told me Fanny insisted they all learn to support themselves and set the example of supporting her own family, as her husband it appears was too lazy to work. Gloria became the Accountant at J Walter Thomson advertising when John Singleton and Bryce

Courtenay were copy boys, a post she held for 35 years. Audrey worked for the Post Master General's department, and Mona became a tailor with her own business in the St James Arcade in Sydney and made clothes for Sonia McMahon, the Governor General's wife and the wife of the Australian Ambassador to London, amongst others. Sadly Gloria died in 2013.

Chapter Four: True to Life – Truth versus Veracity

1. Righting the Generational Wrongs - The Divided Road of Family Influence on Biography

Human Beings are too important to be treated as mere symptoms of the past. They have a value which is independent of any temporal process - which is eternal and must be felt for its own sake.

(Holyrood, cited in Woods 2004, p. 6)

Writing about a dead subject has benefits, for they are not there to criticise or contradict, but the considerations of descendants, their opinions, permission and actions will always be an active part of the biographer's working process. Claire Woods claimed it was only after her mother died that she could open and read her letters: "Only now can I feel I am not intruding too much on the world she and my father created for themselves..." (Woods 2004, p. 2). But I was creating artefacts in writing Marion's letters even if only writing them in the present, for the letters I was writing could be perceived as truth too. They could not hurt the dead but they could hurt those still alive.

In Gloria and Mona I had found "biographic objects" (Woods 2004, p. 2) who could be impacted by what I wrote and there was also my own mother, Alice's granddaughter, who could be affected, though from a different perspective. There was no option but to re-write Marion's story and Fanny's story to tell the new truths, but writing it without offending anyone was an ethical dilemma of great proportion.

This was the most disruptive episode during the writing of the artefact. The secondary character was dictating the terms of the story, and the main character, Marion, was becoming unlikable due to her actions and responses

to changing aspects of the artefact, as new information became available. The research was leading the practice and it became difficult to work with a character who had changed so much under the spotlight of new evidence. The storyline was collapsing under the weight of the truth and it became easy to resent Marion and become even more sympathetic towards Fanny as the discarded pages of the novel piled up.

Fanny became the more fascinating character, new, fresh and the wronged child, as opposed to Marion who was getting rather stale through all the re-writes. I felt as if I were making “Sophie’s Choice” (Styron 1976) between these two main characters, wondering which one to send to her demise.

The meeting with Fanny’s daughters also brought a personal element to the research. Through her possessions, Fanny’s legacy came to life. Her travel diary, collars she had embroidered for her daughters, a portrait taken when she was sixteen. Fanny’s story was new and intriguing whereas Marion’s story was predictable and had been part of my life for as long as I could remember. As well, the acceptance of Fanny’s daughters to my story, her living epistles, endeared them to me.

Marion, however, gained credibility in my mind, when I found out from Mona and Gloria that Marion Leathem had found Fanny was being ill-treated at “Dilga” and brought her to live with her at Molong. Fanny had told her daughters of Marion’s kindness towards her and her goodness in all things to do with her upbringing. I supposed with my better informed background knowledge of what had occurred, that Marion took Fanny in to save her from the abuse and humiliation of country town gossip – but Marion herself would have had to shoulder her fair share of gossip about these terrible events evolving in her family. Marion’s decision to take in this grandchild, possibly causing more rifts between her daughters and herself, made me honour what she had done, triggering another bout of transference at the protector and the protected.

Again, I wanted to use all this new information, but found myself writing two stories about two different and remarkable women. A decision was made to draw a line at a particular point in the research to allow the story to be completed. It became apparent that the inexhaustible supply of information online, newly discovered and through chance meetings with people, who had known the characters, ensures that a story will never be fully researched or told to the writer's satisfaction or the historian's benchmark.

2. Honouring A Life – Biography through Autobiography

**Since I started this I have been doing my work,
perhaps more skilfully than before, but I do not really
know what I am doing.**

**(Freud, 'Letter to Fleiss', 1954, pp.
311-312)**

In this section I discuss why it is almost impossible to write historical biography without reverting to the writer's own autobiographical prism. When the research subject is also an ancestor and living family members know about the task being undertaken, the emotional bonds of family appear to almost insert themselves into the writing in the guise of critics or guilt. Professor James Olney asserts that autobiography is "transformed by being lived through the unique medium of the individual" and believes that "we should fix autobiographical events in the moment of writing and in the history of the writer and his time" (2014, p. 19).

Olney also suggests that there are three components of autobiography, being the "auto", the "bios" and the "act of writing", stating that it is through the act of writing, "that the self and the life, complexly intertwined and entangled, take on a certain form, assume a particular shape and image, and endlessly reflect that image back and forth between themselves as between

two mirrors” (Olney 2014, p. 22). Each aspect feeds the others through creative imagery as the events unfold from the writer’s pen, allowing story to follow experience and imagination to follow story, allowing the unconscious mind to utilise the physicality of the pen on the paper to resurrect the characters.

Glenice Whitting in her autoethnographic work, claims that using her qualitative research and her reflective journal in her novel, allowed her to be “both on the inside and the outside of the text: writing like a novelist, but thinking like an ethnographer” (2012, p. 331). If the work had remained in autobiographical mode, she says, “the capacity to generalise and theorise out of my own life would have been limited” (Whitting 2012, p. 331). Realising that the events of one life are often a consequence of the actions of our forebears led me to examine what had gone before.

The post generational trauma of the family manifests down the line today in Fanny’s descendants, demanding backwards reflection in a psychoanalytical way at the family model of Marion’s family and how it had collapsed along lines generally relating to the female children and grandchildren of Marion Leathem. The strengths of the female characters reinforced the initial idea of writing Marion’s story based on her amazing capabilities and achievements in her time and it became evident that the story had actually consolidated as it had evolved and reinforced the character’s traits as personal strengths.

Partly written in the mode of practice led research, this thesis *follows* the lines of the traditional model in the early researching and writing, demonstrating that practice led research involves a dialectical process, expressing “that creative writing is a way of apprehending, knowing and being in the world; and more specifically... functions simultaneously as a perspective, an epistemology and an ontology specific to writing” (Hecq 2012, p. 1). The conceptualisation of the writing practice, enriched by the research, allows us to understand what we already know but don’t necessarily understand about ourselves. The act of writing, fuelled by the

unconscious knowledge absorbed through the research, broadens the parameters of the writing experientially and emotionally, allowing what we don't know that we know to be encapsulated in the story.

Celia Hunt notes that “writing fictional autobiography and sharing the results in small groups can enhance reflexivity of self experience” (2010, p. 231). It became apparent very early on in writing “Printer’s Ink”, and increasingly so in the PhD reflective journal that allowing “self-experience” to be fictionalised, enabled me as the writer to enhance “the flexibility of the psyche” to stimulate the therapeutic writing process (Hunt 2010, p. 231). Indeed, no matter how much I tried to distance myself from Marion, it was obvious to me that this was not just a journey of the creative writer; it was a journey of the mind. As Marion and I travelled the path of putting her life together, I experienced over and over the concept of “self as other” (Storey 2006, p. 288) as I found myself being Marion but also Marion being me, the reflexivity that Hunt defines “as the cognitive ability to move fluidly back and forth between an inside and an outside perspective on oneself, giving oneself up to the experience of ‘self as other’ whilst also retaining a grounding in one’s familiar sense of self” (Hunt & Sampson 2005, p. 4).

So often an event in Marion’s life, for example the birth of her first grandchild in Fremantle in 1895, became an experience in my life when my daughter gave birth to my first grandchild in Copenhagen in 2009. These similar situations separated by one hundred years and twelve thousand miles occurred just as the Fremantle research became available. I found myself writing Marion’s letters to Nellie in the same way which I would write to my own daughter, but often the reverse was true as well. For the purpose of fiction I needed her to be tough and inflexible, but as my life experiences mirrored hers, the approaches she had taken, under my hand, greatly conflicted with how I felt she should have reacted, particularly if it was something I was experiencing in real life being paralleled in the artefact.

In this self-reflective state of the writing, which emotional events in my own life fuel, triggers to divert the course of the plot and situational similarities with the character are abundant. Considering better ways to resolve the current crisis in real life writing time through the historical crisis in the research required protecting the writer as self from the adversities of the characters. For if our childhood does not provide us with a safe enough environment to develop our defensive concept of 'real self', we will "not develop a feeling of belonging" and sense instead feel helplessness in a potentially hostile world. This can create inflexible and defensive concepts of solutions to life which hinder access to a spontaneously and embodied sense of self (Horney 1950, p. 18). In this elevated emotional state I noted:

When writers consciously use fictional and poetic techniques to tell their story, they suspend the truth telling intentions inherent in the 'autobiographical fact' and this changes the conceptual frame. Now their primary intention is to use memory of self-experience as a trigger for creative writing with an aesthetic end-product in view. Paradoxically it is this suspending of intentions associated with the truth of the self that makes fictional autobiography potentially a very powerful tool for exploring 'truths' that lie beneath the surface of conscious self-knowledge: when people relinquish conscious control over their self-representations, they open up the possibility of thinking about, and experiencing themselves differently (Hunt 2010, p. 234).

The predetermined character traits I had assembled at the start of the project; Marion's strength, Fanny's promiscuity, Nellie's flightiness and Alice's goodness, were collapsing and my reactions to them shifting as I wrote them into the events that redefined them. Marion, because she was strong and stoic and could take care of herself, became the secondary story line and Fanny became the focus of my epistolary redemption. It became increasingly problematic to identify with Marion as I had characterised her into someone I didn't really like anymore. I recalled my perception that

Grenville (2005) had not much liked her character William Thornhill, but having committed to the writing, was obliged to finish the story.

3. Transference and Countertransference in Writing a Family Biography

What are transferences? They are new editions or facsimiles of the tendencies and phantasies which are aroused and made conscious during the progress of the analysis; but they have this peculiarity, which is characteristic for their species, they replace some earlier person by the person of the physician. To put it another way; a whole series of psychological experiences are revived, not as belonging to the past, but as applying to the physician at the present moment.

(Freud 1959, p. 139)

As identified in Chapter 1, Freud first used the term “transference” in *The Interpretation of Dreams* to explain the physical mechanism of the “displacement” of affect “from one idea to another” in the analytic field of human psychotherapy (Freud 1998). This led to Lacan’s re-conceptualisation of the same term which leaves “the notion of transference in its empirical totality” with three different registers, “the symbolic, the imaginary and the real” (Miller 1988, pp. 112-13) with reference “to the role of “the subject supposed to know”” (Hecq 2009, p. 1). Both models of transference have been the subject of much discussion and debate in academic, psychoanalytic and philosophical fields and remain a paradox in terms of the agreed meaning.

It was Freud who suggested the hidden secret connection between the unconscious and transference, however Miquel Bassols likens this to “a

hidden object that is at the same time in everybody's view; an object that acts and works as a signifier of that which we don't know the meaning of" (Bassols 2014, p. 2). In this section I will further discuss how the process of writing family biography triggered the dynamic of transference and countertransference through the "symbiotic" and therefore "hidden" relationship between the creator and the characters (Gandolfo 2014, p. 1). I take my cue from Rendle–Short who states, "When it comes to writing and researching... – the challenge is to get a bird's-eye view of your work over time as a whole..." (2012, p. 1), for the project can assume an integrative portrayal of the creator's life as well as that of the character and I re-examined the various components of my work, so as to better understand it.

Between the tripartite of the reflective journal, the artefact and real life, there was often a sense of conducting my own interpersonal psychotherapy session using Marion's writing as a conduit as to why my feelings towards her were so negative. Observing the writer's "id, ego and superego" in Freud's early model of the human psyche (Freud 1960, p. 11) I found I may have been projecting onto Marion all the complications of dealing with the character I had created, as various aspects of both psyches developed at different stages of the writing. "The more acute the experience, the less articulate its expressions" (Smith 2006, p. 70) and the more volatile the relationship dynamics.

Working so intimately with a compelling character such as Marion for an extended period of time, delving into her life and discovering/imagining all the hidden aspects of her being, became a formula for reincarnating this subject in the form of self or other. The critical analysis of Marion and the affiliated resistance to that repetitive process of loving and hating both Marion and her actions at various times of the research and writing set up an extraordinarily powerful ambivalence towards the character which was often confusing.

Jan Weiner (2009, p. 1) likens Freudian transference to the Aesop Fable: “Every one of us carries two packs, one in front and one behind. The one in front is full of other people’s faults, while the one behind is full of our own flaws”. We can only see the faults of others, not our own shortcomings so we believe “ourselves to be perfect” and the “other” to be at fault. (McNamee, cited in Wiener 2009, p. 1). Freud believed that analysis without transference was not really possible and the suggestibility of transference is a universal mechanism of the human mind which psychoanalysis merely uncovers through the process as we look more deeply at ourselves (Fonagy et al. 2013). Marion, after all, was only what I had written her to be, but I sensed resentment in my writerly self at the thoughts she was expressing and the way she was behaving in specific situation relating to her daughters and granddaughters. This rapid escalation of negative feelings effectively stopped the writing each time I tried to take up her story as the destructive “false link” (Freud & Rieff 1997, p. 106) translated itself between subject and biographer.

As Fanny’s star shone more brightly, requiring the inevitable rewrites, which were becoming tedious and adding pressure to my PhD deadline, the added impact of the manipulative and cold persona Marion had assumed exposed this previously unrecognised phenomena. Whereas I had originally tried to engage Marion’s favour with my respectful account of her life, projected through my own subjective desire to honour her story, I had instead encountered a negative distortion of this relationship through what was manifesting in the research. The generational family stories which had praised Marion in the past had not told the truth, as I was writing it, about the granddaughter she had judged so harshly or the little boy who walked that lonely lane. As well, the writer and family member in me was contending with the contradictions and interplays between all the characters who originated from my pen until it became identifiable as a countertransference process. It was I who was writing the story and the actions, but my characters and I

were both conflicted by the inter-actions of the characters to me and each other.

“Freud formally introduced the term counter-transference at the International Nuremburg Congress in 1910” (Geissmann, 2005 n.p.) and described it as the analyst’s emotional response to stimuli that come from the patient and affect the doctor’s unconscious. In his view it was “an obstacle to progress in analysis because it led him to advocate self-analysis as a way of helping analysts overcome their blind spots” (Weiner 2009, p.). Lacan instead believed that analysts should direct the therapy away from the dual relationship of analyst and analysand to a register where the patient’s unconscious can unfold more fully in a symbiotic space (Lacan 2006). However Natterson (1991, p. 73) claims “Countertransference, while never a warmly received member of the family of psychodynamics concepts, has always been exceedingly useful” in working with the patient’s unconscious beliefs. But he also notes that like transference, “Countertransference has never been a cleanly defined phenomenon” (1991, p. 73). Weiner on the other hand, posits thought that, “Countertransference... got in the way of what Freud was convinced was an essential position of neutrality” (Wiener 2009, p. 58) and most post-Freudian and Lacanian analysts would agree with him today. To put it simply, countertransference happens because of the analyst’s lack of self-awareness.

Being Marion’s biographer, albeit fictional, I was convinced that I should have been impartial in my approach to telling her story. Instead, I was reflexively taking the side of Fanny, condemning what I had previously written as Marion’s attitude towards the plight of the small child Fanny had been. “Printer’s Ink” was rapidly becoming a story about Fanny, the wronged child. The storyline was transmuting to show how wrongly she had been treated by everyone, including Marion, which was at odds with the initial project of Marion as the heroine. I felt as if there were two of me writing two opposing dialogues, neither assisting the progress of the artefact and both conflicting the story I wanted to tell.

Totally confused by the conflictive nature of these unbidden reactions, I took my story to a psychoanalyst, in an attempt to understand what I had seen as the negative emotions I had created for a character, going awry and attacking the very character I was trying to portray. It was also an attempt and a desire to understand the tremendous upheaval of sentiments and conflicts I was experiencing in writing about a woman who had been dead for nearly one hundred years. All of my pre-conceived concepts of how the story should start, evolve and end had gone amiss. I was after all the creator of the characters and the dialogue, but the problem was that the characters were real and Fanny's story of abuse had arrived late in the writing. All my stories had to adjust to these new truths and writing methodologies.

Writing as therapy, particularly writing to work through trauma, what Gandolfo calls "turning pain into art", is "based at least partly on the belief that creativity itself is therapeutic" and that having your story heard by others is a necessary part of any healing process (Gandolfo 2014, p. 5). In a more recent study, James Bradley and Susan Bradley Smith discuss the use of "reflective writing" to enhance the well-being of medical professionals (Bradley & Bradley Smith 2015, p. 1), recognising the benefits to the individual in self analysing their work.

Similarly, in dissecting the writing process, the comparison with psychotherapy was quite conscious and allowed great insight into both the act of writing and the "narrative therapy" of journaling. The journal allowed another story to be articulated and I found that "the text takes on a life of its own, and the self that was not really in existence in the beginning is in the end merely a matter of text and has nothing to do with the... author" (Olney 2014, p. 22). As Bradley Smith asks "can creative and reflective writing reset reality, or at least tamper with it?", citing Charon's theory "that the desire to 'be of interest' to oneself is an essential component of wellbeing" (Bradley & Bradley Smith 2015, p. 1), I assessed this through the early candidature practice I had of keeping two journals, a personal journal into which I recorded all my morning mind traffic, based on *The Artist's Way* (Cameron

2002) approach of freestyle writing. These “morning pages” suggest no re-reading and no analysing, just putting down on paper what is in the mind to clear space for creativity.

The PhD journal was instead a document to record the progress of the writing journey and in particular the notes which would eventually lead to the writing of the exegesis. In my head I referred to this as the parallel approach. I found that once I had written the personal journal, I was left with little emotion and just bare facts for the PhD journal so it became a dry document, scarcely documenting the academic struggle I wanted to examine. The “morning pages” instead recorded the true conflicts of the transference, countertransference and day to day struggles associated with the PhD journey. Eventually the two journals merged into one, often anguished account of the process but became a much more productive document.

The inner reflection that accompanied the writing became a major venture in the realms of therapeutic psychoanalysis and the inevitable self-investigation that accompanies that work of self-enquiry. I was at once the patient, the writer and the analyst, weighing up every interaction between the various players, alive and dead. I was predominantly watching how that was affecting me as the writer and me as the conduit, but also how this was affecting Marion as the final recipient of all the interplays. As Bion noted, I felt “we’re both in this alone” (Cooper 2011, p. 40); it felt as if there were at least two parts to this whole. In my writing, I was “engaging in a form of defensive distancing” (Cooper 2011, p. 47) to allow space away from the “patient” Marion, to allow me to situate Marion “somewhere other than with me”. This allowed the space and therefore objectivity to do her justice, what Cooper calls the “The pluralistic third” (Cooper 2011, p. 47). This distancing allowed for more critical evaluation and perspective on what was actually happening in the writing from the position previously taken before my understanding became clear (Cooper 2011, p. 12).

By embracing the various paradoxes that are transference and countertransference I found more questions than answers and I started on a journey of self-analysis which will continue well beyond the exegesis. For the writer as therapist, “It is likely that the analyst’s use of reverie is vitally related to therapeutic actions in ways that relate not only to the analyst’s ‘uncovering’ of unconscious phenomena but also to the analyst’s curiosity about his or her own mind” (Cooper 2011, p. 57).

Nonetheless, the workable solution was to contain Fanny’s involvement to the context of Marion’s life as a minor parallel figure, using her to bring out and explain qualities in Marion that I was unable to address via other characters. This allowed the “intense, influential, insight-providing, personal experiences defined by the term countertransference” (Natterson 1991, p. 75) to play a fundamental part in writing “Printer’s Ink”. This “totalist position of ‘intersubjectivity’ ” (Natterson 1991, p. 75) effectively allowed me to stop fighting the contentious thoughts and emotions arising from my work with Fanny and instead allow them to work positively with the novel and the character to bring about a successful conclusion to Marion’s story.

The journey that started with Marion will continue into a new story of Fanny and her three daughters as a way to resolve the problems I had with the character, once “Printer’s Ink” and this exegesis are complete. The decision to sideline Fanny allowed “Printer’s Ink” to evolve as it was intended, although with a few major re-writes to accommodate the changes generated by new information and to use the transference to intuitively enhance the story.

4. Post memory and the Family Inheritance

Histories do get forgotten and historical stories need to be reinvestigated and retold by successive generations for their legacies to be understood....

(Ely-Harper 2014, p. 94)

I suggest that the intergenerational plays of traumatic memory in Marion's family have affected, in different ways and to varying degrees, the definitions of the characters of my book, both through their own particular actions and my interpretation of their behaviours, viewed through that same "post memory" prism of family "narrative memory". I have influenced their stories through my own interpretation of their recall as these histories have become the "object narrative" of generational family truth. Post memory characterises the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither fully understood nor re-created (Stanley 2006, p. 21).

What lives on in the descendants of trauma survivors are the "memory stories" which Kerreen Ely-Harper refers to as "memory transmission" or "the lost voices of history" (2014, p. 92). Here, as we approach the end of the journey, and the conclusion of the exegesis, I will show how events in the past can be unconsciously passed to future generations, almost as if stamped on their generational DNA. The legacy of the trauma, simply through what has been transferred inter-generationally can have a significant impact on the behaviour, attitudes and wellbeing of those who have simply been born into families who have experienced traumatic events in the past.

Ely-Harper thinks "the autobiographical narrative invariably is driven by the quest 'to know', to explore, uphold and rework the 'goals of self' " (2014, p. 95): trying to find the meaning of an individual's actions which are neither understood nor intentionally generated by the descendant. These repercussions reflect on the way those in the present think, act and ultimately

live their lives even if they are not aware of the original trauma which has triggered the sequencing of their existence.

The concept of generational trauma and the continuing presence of attitudes and consequences live on in the many descendants of Marion Leathem. In particular for Fanny's children and Alice's children, I identify what Marianne Hirsch (2012) classifies as "postmemory". Although Hirsch's work revolves around the Holocaust, "the guardianship" of a traumatic personal and generational past with which some of us have a 'living connection', and that past's passing into history or myth" (Hirsch 2012, p. 1) is what motivates many of the day to day actions which impact on our lives. It is what Susan Sontag (2003) calls the "pain of others" and what Hirsch translates as "How can we best carry these stories forward, without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves; and without in turn, having our own stories displaced by them?" (Hirsch 2012, p. 2).

"Postmemory" describes the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before (Hirsch 2012, p. 5) and Ely-Harper believes "every generation is faced with the challenge of what it will or will not remember". She goes so far as "speaking of childhood silences of the past on film" as an "opportunity to view how individual and social memories are formulated and intertwined" by using documented film footage of relevant events as a way to "articulate and re-negotiate our understanding of what constitutes and contributes to a national memory" (Ely-Harper 2014, p. 110). The visual image, working as a way to invoke and better understand an action by someone who is unaware of what has gone before, triggers the person's senses or sight, sound and possibly smell and memory to allow emotional and physical engagement with an event from the past.

Without the advantage of film to recall the past, Fanny had only the told truths and "memory stories" of her grandmother and aunt to provide her history. This idea is poignantly dramatized in Christophe Boltanski's recent

prize winning novel *La Cache* (2015) about the legacy of the shoal when one doesn't know one is Jewish. Fanny's life was fractured and conditioned by the early death of her grandfather, leaving her mother fatherless at a young age and possibly looking for male attachment. The early marriage of her mother to a much older man, the move to Fremantle, the early death or disappearance of her own father, the separation from her mother who sought to marry again perhaps created a child, left looking for love, falling into the predatory hands of her unscrupulous uncle. Even after giving up her baby, Fanny's trauma, from her early experience at the hands of men and women, led her into marriage with a highly narcissistic and damaged returned soldier from the Flanders fields. Her life was hard, to say the least, and the lives of her daughters, suffering as they did a hateful and damaged father, meant that all the girls married men who treated them badly, gave them little credit or power over their own destinies and did not allow them to produce children. Post memory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation (Stanley 2006, p. 20).

Early studies into the "alteration of the lateral amygdala during expression and extinction of fear memory" (Lin et al. 2010, p. 335), mainly in relation to Post-traumatic Stress experiments, suggest that fear is a learned condition and can be stored in this part of the brain. This physical evidence reflects strongly the psychological proposals of van der Kolk, La Capra, Scaer and others: Scaer (2014) notes that the "body bears the burden" and documents how "trauma memory" impacts on current memory and conditions. Hirsch proposes that "post memory" can allow "one person's empathic over-identification and adoption of another's memories" (2012, p. 83) which can be "communicated through bodily symptoms" (2012, p. 82) and through the way they affect inheritors' lives and reactions to various situations. Echoing this, Goertz, discussing post memory in the descendants of Holocaust survivors, speaks of the memories "that possess a certain narrative and

emotional truth to them” (1998, p. 33), influencing how inheritors live their lives in the reflected shadow of another’s traumatic experiences.

In a comparable way, Van der Kolk notes that patients “often experience sensory elements of the trauma without being able to make sense of what they are feeling or seeing” which used to be called “repression” or “dissociation” from a medical and psychoanalytical viewpoint but notes that “abandoned feelings call out for attention from the growing shadow of existence” (Scaer 2014, p. xii). Scaer also believes that helplessness felt by those who have observed a traumatic event, may be the “defining element that generates the neurophysiology of trauma itself” (2014, p. 2).

5. Incest – The Locked Closet

The revelation of the sexual abuse of Fanny by her uncle came very late in the research and the writing of the artefact. It is not in the scope of this exegesis to discuss sexual abuse as a theme. However, the uncovered proof of this incident, especially when I had written the artefact using the character of Fanny as the villain, impacted strongly on my emotional conscience and generated the bouts of countertransference with Marion mentioned above. I felt I owed a debt to Fanny for my treatment of her in Marion’s story, which I re-wrote to accommodate the truth. This section is offered only to acknowledge the repercussions of child sexual abuse and the major impact it had on this story.

Up until the 1970s, women lived in a predominantly patriarchal society where women’s voices were silenced. This was particularly true of sexual abuse and incest. Diana Russell discusses how up until 1974, psychiatrists and researchers, including Freud, Kinsey, Sim and Pomeroy, openly denied the effect of incest on children (Russell 1986, p. 30). Kinsey noted there were many cases of “mutually satisfying” relationships between fathers and daughters and claimed the incest to “have no harmful effects” on the child. Sim emphasised that there was minimal effect on these “promiscuous

children” and declares “most settle down to become demure housewives” (Russell 1986, p. 30). Incest has been termed “the societal secret” (Erickson & Gilligan 2002, p. 161) as predators can rely on their victim’s silence, through shame, guilt and their power over the child for their own protection. “Denying the problem enables its perpetuation” (Erickson & Gilligan 2002, p. 161). Alarmingly, this shared “secret” through the “patterns of incest are passed on intergenerationally” (Erickson & Gilligan 2002, p. 161). Lucie Spear notes for example “The poisonous legacy of an incestuous past cripples much of the survivor’s adulthood, and if not treated, taints the victims’ lives, making peace and happiness a faint possibility” (2011, p. 14). Victims of abuse are often forced into “damaging silence or losing all connection with their family” (Spear 2011, p. 120). The effects she highlights are long-lived as post memory in both their lives and those of their children and grandchildren.

The sense of the child’s “promiscuity”, as a causative influence to the abuse, no matter their age, was the contributing factor to defining Fanny’s role as the scarlet woman in the family saga. At the time, we didn’t know Fanny’s age, assuming her to be in her 20s, but even at thirteen, the family still considered her the “femme fatale” who had seduced her middle aged uncle. However, Russell asserts that “the child lives in a tiny world, encompassing only a brief span of memories and often no more than a handful of adults on whom she depends for physical and psychological truths. If this world betrays her, she has no other reality – no past relationships or worldly knowledge to counteract the lesson” (Russell 1986, p. 32). In Fanny’s case, living on an isolated country property, effectively orphaned, the abuse may have started much earlier and continued for many years. For the blame to be attributed to the child rather than the perpetrator as a way to salvage the family reputation is despicable. For the child to bear the shame and be vilified by family has impacted on the descendants of both the perpetrator and the victim, causing the descendants to act in ways and for reasons,

sometimes unknown or not understood by others, indeed perhaps even themselves.

In families where shame and silence were and are still used to keep the family system functional, each member of that family unit becomes party to the secrets and co-dependent upon the rules used to control the family. Shame and transference around Marion, Fanny and their descendants enabled me to see the “unconscious enactments related to our feelings about being objects of transference, since this is the very stuff of analytic therapy” (Cooper 2011, p. 60) and can be difficult to understand.

The many consequences of Marion’s life found places in my mind to generate, mainly through shame and guilt, a different way of telling their stories. The transference and countertransference playing between the various characters permitted me to expose some of the family myths, permitting Marion and Fanny to be seen as what they were, extraordinarily true survivors in a male dominated world. The post memory and generational trauma allowed me to predict the path those stories should take.

6. Building Empathy: Biographer to Subject.

Empathy is a term used to describe how one person will relate to another, or to an object in a given situation. “It is a concept born of the union between psychology and aesthetics” (Harrison 2008, p. 256) and is most commonly used to describe the process of being able to understand the situation or feelings of another. As characters in novels are also “sentient beings”, we “often respond to them, empathize with or stimulate them, in much the same way we do actual people” (Walton 1999, p. 428). However, as Harrison notes, the term “empathy” is relatively new and the “relationship between narrative and interpersonal empathy has not been fully realized” due to the crossovers between psychology, humanities and philosophical aesthetics. She does however argue that the empathy we have for characters in distress creates a much stronger and “more complicated relationship between

imagination, emotion, and ethics” as we suffer with their perceived plights (Harrison 2008, p. 256).

In a similar strain, Gandolfo says that “while the reader might spend several weeks or even a month reading a novel, the writer will spend years with the work” (2014, p. 6) until the writer identifies and empathises with the character’s situation, particularly where the character is or has been traumatised by the events of the writing. I propose that resolving trauma through empathy in the writing assists the writer with resolving trauma born of the writing, especially in relation to some of the previously “silenced and unheard, experiences of women” (Allport 2009, p. 10).

Tanya Lee Allport asks whether “writing fictional trauma” can impact on the reader or writer’s “real-life trauma conceptualisation, expression and resolution” as a way to better understand how trauma impacts on women...” (2009, p. 9). Her question is underpinned by complex issues that lead her to propose that engaging the reader in the resolution of the trauma in the fiction may allow “the conceptualisation of women’s trauma to express, heal and ultimately change, the traumatisation of women” (Allport 2009, p. 10) for as Harrison also suggests, “Whether or not our emotional responses are ‘bona fide’, most readers have had the sensation of being moved by fiction” (2008, p. 256). This means that to create the resolution and empathy, one must first create the trauma and the characters who inflict it, even if that representation is unwittingly written by the unconscious components of the writer’s mind, dealing with “the challenging mechanisms that underlie the actuality of trauma” (Allport 2009, p. 10). Thus, each early disciplinary epistle I wrote from Marion to Nellie or Fanny appeared to be cruel and callous and I found I lacked any empathy with such a heartless old woman even though I knew her dilemma and the stricter standards imposed in those Victorian times. I struggled to create credibility in what the letters were saying and instead let the countertransference direct the writing to an extent it was not possible to use in the final iteration of “Printer’s Ink”. My “disturbance in the field” (Cooper 2011) was that I had set up a comparison for myself with firstly

Marion then secondly Fanny, but as Fanny was the child, and in the context of the writerly contract, “my child”, my empathy was more aligned to her situation.

It is however difficult to write from the perspective of two characters and be totally impartial to both, when one character requires more compassion than the other. Watching a play or reading a book, we can only weep over the “feigned representation” of the suffering of the characters, a “reader can do nothing to intercede” (Harrison 2008, p. 267). However when writing the story, the author controls the situation and provides the comfort as needed to the character who has the most distress, even if the author has created that distress through their pen. In this alignment of self as “other”, by comforting her character’s needs, the author may also be comforting herself.

Conclusion

The more we are absorbed in the fiction and the less attentive we are to the fictionality of the content, the more attributive our emotions will seem to be, the more real the content will appear to be in our phenomenological awareness, and hence the more intense (*ceteris paribus*) our emotional reactions will be

(Cain Todd, *Attending Emotionally to Fiction*, 2012, p. 17)

This thesis explores the links and challenges between epistolary writing, fiction and historical biography when written through the personalised voice of “other”, in this case a revered ancestor. It brings the various strains of epistolarity, autoethnography, *écriture féminine*, post memory and psychoanalytical processes into a cohesive conclusion to specifically address the questions raised and explored as part of the practice led research. It also addresses the question “*Does borrowing from another’s life to create a story, develop a (perceived) debt to the subject in the writer’s conscience and if so, does that debt influence how the writer finally depicts the character?*” This thesis also addresses the subsidiary issue which arose from the writing of the artefact and can be summed up as follows: “*Does transference, activated through generational family narrative, impact on the writer’s ability to clearly depict a historical character with impunity?*”

This exegesis further discusses the poetic art of writing lives in an intimate manner, through “Printer’s Ink” and evaluates the benefits of the story written in an epistolary format in this particular genre to develop a readerly connection with the character and an understanding of the life she lived. Unreal Truths further examines how the practice and writing process of this PhD differs from what I had originally anticipated at the conceptual stage of

the artefact and how this was analysed and resolved through the multi-layered and diverse research which deviated and merged at varying stages of the story.

As the artefact developed and research became increasingly available through online sources, the new data dictated the direction of the story and the development of the main characters in ways that had not been originally anticipated. This phenomenon set up previously unrecognised states of transference and countertransference as I found my sympathies aligned with some of the minor characters and I began to rework the storyline to better care for these individuals. During these transferences, Marion's character unwittingly became the villain, a role which was never intended, as "Printer's Ink" was proposed to honour her life. This characteristic accelerated adversely, as ongoing investigation revealed to me the true fate of her daughters and granddaughter.

Writing under this influence, Marion's letters portrayed her as a hard, calculating and callous woman who did not really care about her family. This was in total contrast to her true persona and how I had originally intended her character to develop. This reaction to my own written words and the matriarchal stance Marion was taking in the story I was creating threatened the integrity of the entire project. I likened this reaction to the countertransference which occurs in psychoanalytical therapy and embarked on an extensive psychological evaluation of myself and my actions to understand why this was happening and how it was impacting my work.

When I finally determined that the countertransference, which Joseph Natterson believes should be renamed "intersubjectivity" (1991, p. 75) was a useful tool for tapping into my unconscious reaction to the research, the characters and particularly their stories, I was free to connect to these reactions and write less rigidly. Any "analysis is incomplete without the analyst's self" (Natterson 1991, p. 3) and like Natterson, I did not want to theoretically separate myself from the book. So allowing my personal

awareness and emotions to alert me as to what was happening in my unconscious mind let me “express my subjective experience at the time of the writing” (Natterson 1991, p. 4) and opened up a creative space for more insightful letters and more authentic reactions from Marion to the events in her life. Tapping into this new resource of autoethnography enabled a deeper psychological connectedness with the characters of Marion Leathem, Nellie Leathem, Fanny Phillips and Alice Leathem, all family and all women I ended up admiring and respecting for the individual ways they had dealt with the lives they were given.

The historical format of “Printer’s Ink” allowed me to place Marion alongside the events of her time and impart an almost subliminal history lesson onto the reader. Marion’s timeline paralleled some of the major events in the formation of the colony and her position as newspaper Proprietress allowed her to have knowledge and speak knowledgably of these topics at a time when women were more circumspect in their opinions.

The choice of epistolary form and its ability to mimic the voice of real characters adds a sense of authenticity to “Printer’s Ink”. With no need for an outside narrator the story was allowed to tell itself and unconsciously reveal the opinions of Marion Leathem. The reader has a sense of being personally involved, due in part to being privy to the more intimate realms of Marion’s secret life. The knowledge which is not present in the story is present in the mind of the reader (Forsythe Hailey 1978) so the complexities of the character develop jointly and separately in both the writing and the reading.

The concepts of post memory and generational trauma have been addressed in this exegesis on a preliminary scale due to constraints of space. The further reaching consequences of post memory and the impact it has on its unsuspecting descendants is an extensive area for exploration into further epistolary works in the Leathem family dynamic. It is anticipated there will be further creative research into generational post memory and its

impact on historical fiction and biography, and I believe the epistolary form provides a credible way to do that.

In a similar way I have cursorily addressed the “poisonous legacy” of incest (Spear 2011) and the damning consequences to the victims and their families, as seen through the eyes of Fanny. Because victims were, up until very recently, often seen as perpetrators or willing participants, and because the truth had an enormous impact on my story, I wanted to re-pay a (perceived) debt for the generational damning of Fanny. In being Fanny’s voice, I hope to let the blame be apportioned as it should.

The most beneficial aspect of writing this exegesis is that it has given me a clear sense of my internal writing process for my future work, particularly in relation to biography. By identifying the obstacles that both stopped and “side-tracked” me during the writing of “Printer’s Ink”, I have learned to trust the unconscious creative processes and have faith in my ability to have an authentic voice. The story will always be told with the unconscious mind as a formidable writing partner.

The reflective journal, something I have used most of my adult life as an aid to the creative process, helped me identify patterns of research and stalled creative pathways. Similarly, the use of evocative autoethnography, which Ellis and Bochner define as “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (Ellis & Bochner 2000, p. 739) as well as analytical autoethnography, provided a structure to self-evaluate and determine the writing direction as it has evolved.

On a personal level, this candidature has allowed me to tell Marion’s story to the best of my ability, a story which deserved to be told and might otherwise be lost to time. Through the course of this exegesis I have represented that “creative epistolarity is uniquely placed to challenge metanarratives by

providing women” (Whitting 2012, p. 334) with a place to find their voice and write their stories. And in the end:

I was trying to be faithful to the shape of the historical record, and the meaning of all those events that historians had written about. What I was writing wasn’t real, but it was as true as I could make it (Grenville 2006, p. 191).

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