Redefining Eve Langley:
EVE LANGLEY AND HER EDITORS

By Helen Vines BA (Hons) Dip. Ed.
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Acknowledgment

My thanks to my supervisor, Professor Lucy Frost, whose support and encouragement has been greatly appreciated in the preparation of this thesis.
Declaration of originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where acknowledgment is made in the text of the thesis.

Helen Vines

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30 September 2000
Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between Australian author Eve Langley (1904 – 1974) and her editors at the Sydney based publishing house Angus & Robertson. Since Langley was resident in Auckland, New Zealand from 1932 – 1960, the chief sustenance of this relationship was letter writing. The Eve Langley/Angus & Robertson correspondence archive, which was purchased by the Mitchell Library in 1977, contains 286 items, most of which involve Langley as author or recipient.

The relationship began in 1940, with the acceptance for publication of Langley’s first novel *The Pea Pickers*. The correspondence covers the period October 1941 to July 1975. The Angus & Robertson letters provide a chronology of Langley’s writing practices, as well as biographical information that locates her activities more precisely than has previously been achieved. Close analysis of this correspondence has not been done before, despite its obvious importance as primary source material. Other material has been drawn upon to clarify or supplement the information provided in the letters. Langley wrote literally millions of words about her life, describing experiences, feelings and activities, yet despite this, its veracity – and probity – is the subject of intense speculation.

This has in part come about through the writing of a rather problematic biography, *The Importance of Being Eve Langley*, by Joy Thwaite. The biography argues that Langley suffered from psychiatric and personality disorders which led inevitably to a decline in her creative powers and an inability to lead a meaningful life. The biographer’s methodology, in which the unpublished autobiographical novels are treated as a transparent window onto the life, created a confusing – and arguably inaccurate – profile of Langley’s life and work.

By way of contrast, the letters Langley sent to her editors had a professional purpose, and provide another perspective to Langley’s life over a period of nearly thirty years. These letters tell us about the aspirations and activities of Eve Langley during this period, and the editorial process followed by Australia’s foremost editors. It also provides an opportunity to reconstruct what is known and understood of this most interesting of Australian writers.
Note regarding the title of The Pea Pickers

Throughout the Angus & Robertson correspondence, Eve Langley's first novel The Pea Pickers is referred to as a range of variations on the title: Pea-Pickers, The Pea-Pickers, Peapickers, etc. The 1991 edition is titled The Pea-Pickers. The original 1942 title, however was The Pea Pickers. By the third edition, in 1966, the dust jacket carried the title as The Pea Pickers, but the title page, and the blurb inside the dust jacket, read as The Pea-Pickers. We know from the Angus & Robertson correspondence that there was some discussion about changing the cover illustration for the 1966 edition. The sales staff wanted to change the cover, but Beatrice Davis strongly disagreed: her instructions were that the cover should remain the same as the 1958 edition. Some confusion at this time lead to the hyphenation of the title, and subsequent editions have continued with this variation. I have retained the original title, The Pea Pickers, as it appeared on the 1942 edition.
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Introduction

This thesis explores the relationship between Australian author Eve Langley (1904 – 1974) and her editors at the Sydney based publishing house Angus & Robertson. As Langley was resident in Auckland, New Zealand from 1932 – 1960, the chief sustenance of this relationship was letter writing. The Eve Langley/Angus & Robertson correspondence archive, which was purchased by the Mitchell Library in 1977, contains 286 items, most of which involve Langley as author or recipient. The Angus & Robertson letters, covering the period October 1941 to July 1975 provide a chronology of Langley’s writing practices, as well as biographical information. Close analysis of this correspondence has not been done before, despite its obvious importance as primary source material. The project of the thesis is to construct a narrative based on the correspondence that focuses on Langley’s writing practices and her relationship with her editor and publisher. The aim is to situate the narrative firmly within the documentary evidence.

Langley wrote literally millions of words about her life, describing experiences, feelings and activities, yet despite this, its veracity – and probity – is the subject of intense speculation. This has in part come about through the writing of a rather problematic biography, The Importance of Being Eve Langley, by Joy Thwaite. The biography argues that Langley suffered from psychiatric and personality disorders which led inevitably to a decline in her creative powers and an inability to lead a meaningful life. The biographer’s methodology – in which the unpublished autobiographical novels are treated as a transparent window onto the life – creates a confusing, and arguably inaccurate profile of Langley’s life and work. The Angus & Robertson letters provide totally different insights, revealing her aspirations and activities during this period and the editorial process followed by Australia’s foremost editors. It also provides an opportunity to reconstruct what is known and understood of this most interesting of Australian writers.

Eve Maria Langley was born at a cattle station in New South Wales in 1904, to Mira (nee Davidson) and Arthur Alexander Langley. Her sister Lilian May, known also as June and Blue, was born the following year. In 1929, Eve (who was then 25) and June adopted male attire and set off to work as itinerant laborers in Gippsland, where they picked peas and other seasonal crops, shocking and amusing the locals with their novel ways and carefree habits. While she was thus employed, Langley wrote copiously in her journals of her thoughts and experiences, imagining them transformed into a literary masterpiece.

1 There are also other in-house documents pertaining to the author and correspondence between Langley’s sister, June, and Angus & Robertson chief editor, Beatrice Davis.
2 Angus & Robertson: correspondence and Readers’ Reports: Langley, Eve. Mitchell Library. ML MSS 3269/47. MSS 69-631. MSS 65. 24 October 1941. All future references to the Langley documents that are contained under this file will be referred to using the MSS number within the file and the date.
3 MSS 629. 31 July 1975.
In 1932, Langley travelled to New Zealand, following her sister (who had married), and her mother whom they called Mia. She met her future husband, Hilary Clark, in 1936 and married him in 1937. He was an artist; a student and then a teacher at the Elam Art School in Auckland. Langley worked as a freelance writer, and embraced a widening coterie of fellow artists and writers. Their daughter Bisi was born in July 1937, and two other children followed in relatively quick succession: Langley in 1938 and Karl Marx in October 1941. The Clarks lived in a state of desperate poverty, with Langley constantly trying to juggle the demands of young children, and write both for her own personal gratification as well as to earn money to sustain the family. In 1940, Langley decided to whip the narrative she had envisaged in her pea picking days into a book, and submit it for the prestigious S. H. Prior prize. Although in a fairly rough state when submitted, the brilliance and originality of The Pea Pickers shone through, and she shared the prize with two others.

It was in this way that she came to the attention of Beatrice Davis, who was one of the three judges, along with H. M. Green, and Frank Dalby Davidson. In an article in the Bulletin in October 1940, Davidson described The Pea Pickers as a novel to be 'cherished'. The manuscript also made a profound impression on Davis. In 1977 Meg Stewart interviewed her about Langley for an ABC radio program, called ‘The Shadows are Different’. During this interview, which also included Meg Stewart’s father, the poet Douglas Stewart, Davis talked about The Pea Pickers, recalling the magic of discovering her first significant manuscript. ‘I first met Eve Langley by name and through the delighted astonishment of finding her manuscript for The Pea Pickers [amongst] entries for the Prior Prize of 1940...I was pretty new to the publishing game...but...the great delight in publishing is to find a real writer that nobody else has known about before ...[The Pea Pickers] struck me as the first imaginative writing in a full length work that had appeared in this country since Christina Stead started in her own inimitable way in 1928-30.’ Davis defined a ‘creative imagination’ as one that ‘comes from some quality of mind and spirit and emotion that gives the writer the power to create his own world’. She was of the view that no efforts should be spared ‘to encourage and nurture such talent’. Davis felt Langley had this quality, and over the next two and a half decades, actively fostered her development. The Pea Pickers was ‘set’ and announced to the book trade by October 1941, and published by June 1942. Beatrice Davis did the editing of

5 ibid. p. 176.
6 ibid. p. 251.
7 ibid. p. 254.
8 ibid. p. 283.
9 ibid. p. 407.
13 ibid.
14 MSS 65. 24 October 1941.
the manuscript over a period of approximately one year between October 1940 and October 1941. The correspondence relating to this process was not in the Angus & Robertson file purchased by the Mitchell Library in 1977, and may not now be extant.

Approximately six weeks after the birth of her third child in October 1941, Langley, her husband and three children set sail in an old converted lifeboat they called The Saunterer, intent on voyaging amongst islands off the coast of New Zealand. At some point in their travels, a mishap on board caused boiling water to cascade over the children, burning them severely. Langley was subsequently committed to the Auckland Mental Hospital in August 1942, where she remained until 1949. Her children were institutionalised, and Langley was estranged from them for most of her life. She resumed her correspondence with Beatrice Davis in 1950.

Beatrice Davis was very highly regarded in the publishing industry and her retenchment from Angus & Robertson in 1973 after 37 years service created headlines. She treated writers with respect and was of the view that ‘an author’s opinions were sacrosanct, an author’s style should be preserved, and that an author’s editor should be an encouraging and understanding friend.’ Her authors included Ruth Park, Ion Idress, Hal Porter and Thea Astley. When Davis won the National Book Council’s Bookman’s Award in 1976 a newspaper report described her as ‘Slender and elegant, utterly feminine...rather shy and reserved of manner, she has no executive bossiness about her. But her gentle dignity misleads. Beatrice Davis is determined and a perfectionist.’ Davis was made a member of the Order of Australia in 1980; the University of Sydney conferred an honorary Doctorate of Letters on her in 1992, and was awarded an Emeritus Fellowship of the Literature Board of the Australia Council.

Davis had a policy of employing capable and intelligent staff, then training them to her high standards: she expected all her staff to be able to see a book through the entire production process. She created a warm and friendly environment in which to work. Her staff was very loyal, with many staying for a very long time: Nan

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16 For example, ‘Heads roll at A & R.’ The Australian. 28 February 1973. p. 11. ‘Much consternation among senior local writers over the sacking by Angus and Robertson of four editors, including Beatrice Davis – doyen of Australian fiction editors – as part of stringent economy measures. Miss Davis has been a senior fiction editor at A & R for 37 years...’


19 Rosemary Dobson, who joined the Angus & Robertson staff in 1947 recalled that ‘One day you would be writing a blurb and the next day would be editing a manuscript, or you had to interview authors...we did a lot of reading of manuscripts and reporting on them...Beatrice’s standards in book editing were remarkable, she could do the most complicated and frightful textbooks, scientific books that required layouts of diagrams, all that sort of thing...So it was very good training, and also most congenial.’ Dobson, Rosemary. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. 1975. TRC 327 ANL. Dobson’s views are reinforced by Douglas Stewart, who edited the Bulletin’s ‘Red Page’ and joined Angus & Robertson in 1961. He described the atmosphere as ‘happy and focussed...They knew exactly what they were doing and where they were going.’ Stewart, Douglas. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. 21 March 1975. TRC 336 ANL.
McDonald, for example, (whom Davis considered the best book editor in Australia), worked with her for 30 years. Davis’s commitment to literary quality had the full support of the director of publishing, George Ferguson.  

The firm ‘had a clear tradition of publishing the best Australian literature and so they knew exactly what they were doing. If a book came in and it was a good Australian book, well, you published it, it was so clear and simple...one way or another you’d find a way of doing it. Sometimes by subsidy from the Commonwealth Government, sometimes by just doing it and breaking even or losing a bit and letting some other book pay for it.’  

Davis argued that their commitment to publishing literary novels ‘brought prestige to the firm,’ but factual books were the ‘largest part of Angus & Robertson output’.

Angus & Robertson was an ‘emporium publisher’, publishing everything from verse to medical text books, and described itself as ‘one of the largest organisations of its kind in the world.’ Right from its earliest days, the firm (which was established in 1884) focussed all its efforts on books; it had a policy of promoting directors from staff, and of delegating full responsibility for particular sections of the business to individuals. Up until 1959, the firm operated as three separate but inter-dependent businesses: retail, publishing and printing. It was not until the late 1950s that many of the time-honoured traditions of the firm began to be challenged. In 1960, Davis’s

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20 Arthur G Smith who joined Angus & Robertson in November 1949 (retiring in June 1962, having reopened the Melbourne shop in October 1951), said there was a clear distinction made at Angus & Robertson between the ‘literary’, of which Beatrice Davis was a firm advocate, and manuscripts of a more ‘popular’, but less accomplished quality. Interviewed in 1973, he described his discovery of the manuscript of Betty Jeffrey’s *White Coolies*, ‘a human story of what our nurses in captivity had suffered at the hands of the Japanese’. Smith sent it through to Davis, who was slow to respond. He then rang through to Sydney and spoke to her directly. She said she could not put her imprimatur on it; that it was ‘not literature, you know, Arthur’. George Ferguson supported her decision, but Smith was adamant that the manuscript was a commercial winner, and personally placed an order for 5,000 in order to get it printed: *White Coolies* subsequently sold nearly half a million copies. ‘I think that I deserve a thoroughly good thump on the back for saving Betty Jeffrey’s *White Coolies*, which is something that will always remain part of Australian history’. Smith, Arthur. G. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. 11 September 1973. TRC 221. ANL.

21 Stewart, Douglas. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. op cit.

22 Davis, Beatrice. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. 19 May 1977. TRC 527 ANL.


26 The foundation stone of Angus & Robertson was laid in June 1884 by David Mackenzie Angus, who opened a small second-hand bookshop in Market Street, Sydney. Angus & Robertson’s publishing activities began in 1888 with the publication of three books. Expansion in sales and publishing resulted in a move to larger premises at 89 Castlereagh Street in 1890. The first big success was publication of Banjo Paterson’s *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses* in 1895, to be followed immediately by two further successes; a book of verse and a book of prose by Henry Lawson. Things continued to consolidate and expand, and a presence was established in Melbourne in 1901, but closed in 1904. It was reopened in 1951, under the firm hand of Arthur Smith. A controlling interest was acquired in
role was effectively undermined by a new focus on shareholder values and economic imperatives (see Chapter 7). This change in status for Langley’s greatest advocate was possibly one of the reasons why her novel ‘Bancroft House’, which was recommended for publication, did not get published.

Discovering Eve Langley and *The Pea Pickers* was a high point in Davis’s career, and she always hoped that there was something more for the author beyond the apotheosis of *The Pea Pickers*. Davis handed over the editing of Langley’s *White Topee* to Nan McDonald in early 1950, and only resumed writing to Langley following their meeting in Sydney in 1956. As the firm expanded and editorial staff increased, Davis tended to take a hands-on role in editing only when specifically asked to ‘because the author wanted me to, and I had always dealt with them’.27

In later years, Davis described Langley as ‘a very strange and fascinating creature’. She perceived her to be physically strong, but uninterested in ‘the normal comforts that conventional people expect’. She had a world full of fantasy, but could be ‘extremely practical...she seemed tremendously shy, yet on the other hand she was completely without fear...Though...you wanted to love her very much it was very difficult to feel close to Eve, because you never felt she was really there at all.’28

Douglas Stewart too, noted the complexity of this woman, who, despite appearances, could address the demands of writing life like any other author. ‘All those years when she had this terrific drop into eccentricity she could write a perfectly sane letter, have a perfectly sane interview...when we had a talk with her about the unpublished novels...we said we hope to get around to selecting from them sometime, and she was satisfied with this. It was a perfectly normal conversation just like with any other author.’29 This perplexing individual, who could be frumpy one minute, and alive with the sparkling green eyes of a Becky Sharp the next;30 at one moment lucid and the next drifting off into another plane of thought, inspired great loyalty, friendship and admiration. Her lifelong friend, the poet, Gloria Rawlinson, wrote to Langley in January 1958: ‘I love you for your pluck and your eyes which see so much and your heart which is brave enough to receive everything. What more can one say?’31


27 Davis, Beatrice. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. op cit.
28 Stewart, Douglas and Beatrice Davis. Interview with Meg Stewart. ‘The Shadows are different; An Appreciation of Eve Langley.’ op. cit.
29 Stewart, Douglas. ibid.
Langley’s letters have a special role in accurately recreating the circumstances of her life after 1949. The relationship that developed between Langley and Davis and McDonald essentially hinged on Langley’s performance as a writer, but there were also opportunities for Langley to describe her thoughts and activities on a more personal level. Her best letters combined the unique and memorable qualities of her prose. Douglas Stewart observed that hers ‘were lovely letters...[an] extraordinary mixture [of]...a little bit of prose...of romantic verbiage. Lovely words like “melancholy” that she liked just for the sound of them...realism and humour...the letters lit up the day. When you got a letter from Eve Langley that was a wonderful event. And it was such lovely prose apart from anything else. Nobody else ever used prose in a letter, they used words, but you wouldn’t call it prose.’

The Angus & Robertson letters demonstrate conclusively that Langley was not some pathetic victim of uncontrollable mental centrifugal forces whose life and work degenerated irreparably following her illness of 1942. She was a knowing creature whose drifts into fantasy were deliberately cultivated. She saw herself as a traveller in body and spirit, and did not feel constrained by convention, or time or place. In a rare interview, she explained her philosophy in the following way.

A nomadic writer has more to say than a settled writer could ever say. The gipsy can speak, but the man who is settled, he can't speak...I'm just like a caravan and like a caravan I am born to wander across all the plains of fantasy ... that's what I really cultivate, a sort of embroidery of literature. I don't think myself that I have done very much in this world as a writer except as one who chatters and embroiders all the time, endlessly, a great fantasy of romance. I just like to stroll across the plains of the imagination...and I just don't care...when I'm tired of the gods, I like to go up amongst the barbarians....

32 Stewart, Douglas and Beatrice Davis. Interview with Meg Stewart. 'The Shadows are different; An Appreciation of Eve Langley.' op cit.
33 Langley, Eve. Interview with Hazel de Berg. 9 May 1964. ANL.
Chapter One

1941 – 1951

In October 1950 Beatrice Davis attempted to rekindle her relationship with Eve Langley after a lapse of almost eight years. The two had not been in direct contact since 1942, the year of publication of The Pea Pickers, and of Langley’s committal to the Auckland Mental Hospital. Davis initiated the contact on the pretext of seeking permission for the publication of a poem, ‘Celtic Guest’, and invited the author to resume their correspondence. She wrote ‘we do think of you and continue to find the Pea Pickers an enchanting book...I should love to hear from you.’

However the letter did not reach Langley for some time, perhaps not until June 1951, because Davis sent it first to Langley’s sister, June, to be forwarded at her discretion. The reason for this course of action was Davis’s concern about Langley’s state of mind and the possibility of precipitating another crisis. On 24 June 1950, Davis had written to June seeking her advice as to whether contact with Langley was appropriate at this time: ‘Do you think she is sufficiently well for me to write to her? It would give me great pleasure to be in touch with her, but, of course, I do not wish to upset her or to impose any strain.’ The editor was tentative because June had provided her with a great deal of information that raised serious questions about Langley’s mental state and ability to cope with change.

Davis had wanted to be in touch with Langley directly following her release from hospital. The circumstances of their previous contact had been in relation to the publication of The Pea Pickers in 1942. The only letter on the file addressed directly to Langley from this period is from Walter Cousins, publishing director and later chairman of Angus & Robertson. He wrote on 24 October 1941 to Langley at 20 Queens Street Chelsea, Auckland, requesting that she sign and forward a copy of the publishing agreement for The Pea Pickers. He advised Langley that ‘the book is being set and I have announced its publication to the trade’. Cousins was restrained, but highly complimentary in his appraisal of the book: ‘the story is a very fine piece of work and we are proud to publish it’. This was praise indeed from someone whom editor Beatrice Davis described as ‘a delightful man...we all loved him – [but he] really was not interested in what you would call literature’.

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1Angus & Robertson: correspondence and Readers’ Reports: Langley, Eve. Mitchell Library. ML MSS 3269/47. MSS 69-631. MSS 141. 26 October 1950. Accompanied MSS 139. 26 October 1950. All future references to the Langley documents that are contained under this file will be referred to using the MSS number within the file and the date.

2MSS 141. 26 October 1950.

3MSS 121. 24 June 1950.

4MSS 65. 24 October 1941.

Subsequent letters were sent to the Auckland District Public Trustee, who had carriage of Langley’s affairs while she was restrained under the Mental Health Act.\textsuperscript{6} Langley’s husband, Hilary Clark had committed her to the Auckland Mental Hospital on 14 August 1942, where she remained until 6 March 1949. The Public Trustee did not relinquish her affairs until 1954.\textsuperscript{7} During the period in question, 18 letters were exchanged between Angus & Robertson and the Trustee, from 18 December 1942 to 5 May 1949. The letters were concerned primarily with the publication and royalties of \textit{The Pea Pickers}.\textsuperscript{8} A New York publisher E. P. Dutton and Co made a ‘fair offer for the book’\textsuperscript{9} in 1944 and it was subsequently published in America as \textit{Not Yet the Moon} (1946).\textsuperscript{10} Dutton & Co. was anxious for biographical information about

\textsuperscript{6} MSS 69. Certification under the Mental Defectives Act, 1911, of Eve Langley from 14 August 1942. A copy of this document was sent by the Public Trustee to Angus & Robertson. MSS 67. 18 December 1942.

\textsuperscript{7} MSS 627. n.d.

\textsuperscript{8} MSS 67. 18 December 1942. The Trustee asked Angus & Robertson to ‘forward cheques for future royalties to me until further advised,’ and enclosed a copy of Langley’s certificate of committal to the Hospital. They also requested that a copy of \textit{The Pea Pickers} be sent to Langley. Walter Cousins forwarded a royalty statement to the Public Trustee early on 18 January 1943 saying it was a ‘copy of the last royalty statement sent to Miss Eve Langley. This cleaned up the first edition of “The Pea Pickers”. But we have ordered from the printers another printing but it may be some months before this second printing is ready.’ Cousins added that the copy they were sending to Langley was the only one in stock ‘and we are not making any charge for this copy’. [MSS 71. 18 January 1943.] Angus & Robertson forwarded royalties of £65/3/8 to the Public Trustee on 11 August 1943. [MSS 73.]

\textsuperscript{9} MSS 75. 2 March 1944.

\textsuperscript{10} Angus & Robertson approached its New York Literary agents Leyland Hayward Inc with \textit{The Pea Pickers}, who tried to sell it to a number of publishers in America. The only bid came from the New York publishers E.P. Dutton and Co who, in the opinion of Angus & Robertson, made a fair offer for the book, and recommended that it be accepted. Dutton & Co also wanted the film and radio dramatic rights and an option on Langley’s next three books. Walter Cousins wrote to the Public Trustee and the response was prompt and positive: ‘Mrs. Clark was very pleased with the offer, and directed that it be accepted.’ [MSS 77. 10 March 1944.] Langley was obviously not considered so unwell that she could not give instructions regarding her affairs. The Public Trustee however was hesitant to make any commitments without full disclosure of the contract Langley had signed with Angus & Robertson, and particulars about the commissions to be charged against her share of the proceeds. Having seen the agreement that was sent by Angus & Robertson, the District Public Trustee then inquired as to the likelihood of further editions of the book. [MSS 89. 27 March 1944]. To this question, Walter Cousins replied:

\begin{quote}
We would like to print THE PEA PICKERS again, but unfortunately it is one amongst 100 titles we have to reprint and we are not sure whether we will have the paper to spare. The Commonwealth Government promised to help the publishers in Australia regarding paper, but so far not much has come forward. We are hoping that in the next few months some paper will be made available. [MSS 95 12 April 1944].
\end{quote}

The American publisher was apparently informed by Angus & Robertson of Langley’s situation, because in April 1944, Walter Cousins forwarded an extract of a letter received from Leyland Hayward Inc (Angus & Robertson’s New York agent) dated 22 February 1944 which included in part the following:

\begin{quote}
I was particularly happy to be able to send you a cable to say that Dutton’s want to publish Eve Langley’s novel. This despite the fact that your reply to our cable of inquiry contained some bad news about Miss Langley’s future work. Because they cannot get to the publication of the book until sometime in 1943 [sic] (this question of paper shortage), they did not want to put down too much of the advance on signing. Hence, the division of the monies $250.00 on signing, $500.00 on publication. The royalties are, I think,
\end{quote}
Langley, and Angus & Robertson wrote to the Trustee’s office asking them to supply
details and photographs.\textsuperscript{11} There was then a gap of four and a half years in the
correspondence, although information about sales and royalties must have occurred. It
was not until the end of 1949, soon after Langley was released from hospital, that
Beatrice Davis sent a letter either directly to Langley via the Public Trustee, or to the
Public Trustee himself. (This letter is not on file.)

It was this request that was eventually directed to Langley’s sister June, and which
resulted in the ensuing dialogue between June and Davis. Davis wanted to
communicate the possibility of reprinting a new edition of \textit{The Pea Pickers}, and
obtain information needed for publicity purposes. Her request to the Public Trustee
for information was forwarded to June and on May 8 1950, June wrote to Davis:
‘Dear Miss Davis, I have received a copy of your letter from the Public Trust
requesting some early biographical particulars of Eve Langley.’\textsuperscript{12} From May through
to October, Davis and June exchanged letters. Davis’s proposal to write to Langley
was discouraged by June on the basis that ‘It may affect her as before, unbalance her I
mean, better to let well alone. She is interested in her work, and seems to be getting
back to normal.’\textsuperscript{13}

Instead, June offered her own account of Langley’s activities and behaviour,
articulating Langley’s life largely in relation to her own, beginning with the
disapproving declaration: ‘My sister has lived a life of selfish indulgence, a selfish
life, and has paid dearly for it.’\textsuperscript{14} June wrote in excess of 4000 words, covering a
range of topics. Much of it was to do with her relationship with Langley, but June also
included information about her own health and domestic arrangements.

\begin{quote}
My sister subsisted on some sort of charitable allowance, preferring this manner of
existence to good honest work... through diligence and frugal living [I] managed to save
sufficient money from my earnings... supporting my mother as well; to purchase a small
\end{quote}

satisfactory, in view of the circumstances, that is 10\% to 5000 copies, 12\% to 10,000,
and 15\% thereafter. I hope that Canada is available as the American publisher can
cover that territory far more easily than the English publishers and I do think that
Dutton’s will be rather insistent upon that point. Dutton’s is one house which demands
participation in some of the subsidiary rights. I got them down to 20\% on the film and
radio rights and 10\% on dramatic. They are hoping that Miss Langley will regain her
health and get to writing again and so they are asking for an option on her next books on
terms to be arranged. Dutton’s are really frightfully keen about Miss Langley’s work and
want to know as much about her as they can. Will you send through whatever
biographical data you have? Could we have a picture of Miss Langley?

We have written to our agents telling them that Dutton’s can have the Canadian rights.
This is usual with publishers in U.S.A.

We would very much like to know if you think Miss Langley will regain her health at some
future date. Also could you get some biographical data about her, and a photograph of
any sort? American publishers as a rule try to get from us biographical details of the
authors they publish, also photographs. [MSS 91/93. 6 April 1944.]

\textsuperscript{11} MSS 91/93. 6 April 1944.
\textsuperscript{12} MSS 107. 8 May 1950.
\textsuperscript{13} MSS 121. 12 July 1950.
\textsuperscript{14} MSS 115. 12 July 1950.
sweet shop...I was able, in turns with Little Mia to pay visits to indolent Eve, who was usually found in a semi naked state, lying like a brown snake in the deep grass under a summer sun. How we both envied her. To be outside, forever, never to live again like a blowfly in a bottle...We would take with us food and if we could spare it money. Mia and I never thought to criticise her, always...Poor Eve... There was no one to blame but herself, ever thing that ever happened to her had been of her own seeking.

June also enclosed to Davis letters sent to her by Langley and Hilary Clark, which she felt supported her assertions. The letter from Hilary Clark to June is not dated, but clearly states his intentions regarding Langley: ‘I have absolutely no intention of resuming life with Eve’. He offered an apology for being behind in his maintenance payments: ‘Though my salary may prevent the payment of a pension, it still does not go very far.’ The letter from Langley to June was written in the autumn of 1950, and showed all the signs of Langley resuming ordinary life, with information about living arrangements, work and friendships. She was busy, and spoke of a writers evening, where she had met up with the poet Henry Brennan. At the time of writing, she was just dashing off to ‘do some small shopping, under brilliant lights among a brilliant people’. She signed the letter Mrs Hilary Clark.

Langley had secured a position in the bindery section of the Auckland Public Library on 5 May 1950, and was residing nearby, in boarding houses (she called them ‘private hotels’) in Wellesley Street, then Liverpool Street, in Auckland. Her relations with her estranged husband, Hilary, were strained according to June, but amiable enough according to Langley herself, although later, things became more problematic. In her letter to June in autumn, 1950, Langley said that she hadn’t seen Hilary lately, ‘but am still being faithfully maintained, and sign the book at his solicitor’s every Friday for my “income”. Hilary is very good, really. There is no one like friend husband, after all. He never troubles me in any way; just sticks to his job, and helps keep me going.’

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15 ibid.
16 MSS 121. 12 July 1950 accompanied by MSS 61/63. n.d. [c. 1950] Hilary Clark to David and June. (‘I have explained her husband’s attitude. I will enclose a letter to verify this too, so no mention of that matter either. I know you will understand Miss Davis’) and MSS 109/111/113 26. [no month, but written in autumn] 1950. Eve Langley to June: (‘I will enclose her last letter to me’).
17 MSS 61. n.d.
18 MSS 109/111/113. 26 [no month, but written in autumn] 1950. (Langley refers to autumn in her letter.)
20 MSS 109/111/113. op. cit.
Langley did not have access to any of her money; the Public Trustee did not relinquish her affairs until 1954.\(^{21}\) According to her biographer, she was existing at this time on a fairly meagre allowance of NZ £13 a fortnight, which was supplemented by 30s from Hilary.\(^{22}\) For reasons that are unclear, Langley had a setback in late October/early November that year,\(^ {23}\) and was readmitted to the Auckland Mental Hospital for observation for about a month. Langley described it as a ‘rest’.\(^ {24}\) According to June, who was distressed and angry about it, Hilary had recommitted her.\(^ {25}\)

June wrote to Beatrice Davis informing her of Langley’s situation, and giving permission for the poem ‘Celtic Guest’ to be included in H. M. Green’s *Modern Australian Poetry* anthology.\(^ {26}\) Demonstrating some insight into the production of the poem, she volunteered when and where it was written (1941). There was no mention of the letter that Davis had enclosed to be forwarded to Langley. June referred to a collection of manuscripts that Langley had entrusted to her before her illness, (“June,” she said, “guard this”; a large cushion cover jammed with tightly rolled manuscript “with your life”.) and which she now requested be returned to her through the Public Trustee. June was reluctant to do this because she was afraid they would be lost, or destroyed, and asked Davis for her advice.

Davis was mindful of the potential significance of the manuscripts, and responded by advising June not to ‘hand them over’.\(^ {27}\) She hastened to distance Angus & Robertson from this recommendation, saying it was ‘merely my own feeling in the matter’. However in a handwritten note at the bottom of the letter she offered to keep them ‘in our strong room for you’. The only circumstances under which it was appropriate to return the papers to Langley, she felt, was the author’s ‘intention, and capacity, to do further work for which she would need to refer to the papers in question’. In recommending this course of action, Davis flagged her acceptance of June’s version of Langley’s state of diminished responsibility. The letter began by Davis saying that Hilary could not be ‘altogether’ blamed for his action in having Langley readmitted to hospital. She then expressed sympathy for June’s health, adding that it was probably ‘for the best’, since ‘the strain of caring for Eve might have been more than you could endure’. June’s reports about Langley had had quite an influence on Davis, to the extent that the editor was prepared to advise a course of action contrary to Langley’s wishes. Davis did not inquire whether June had forwarded her letter to Langley.

\(^{21}\) MSS 121. 12 July 1950. Langley herself verified this in MSS 627. n.d. ‘They [the Public Trust] relinquished my affairs in 1954, and the District Public Trustee handed back my estate to me, in that year.’

\(^{22}\) Thwaite, Joy. op. cit. p. 424.

\(^{23}\) June wrote to Davis saying she had received a letter from the Hospital ‘about a week ago’, telling her of Langley’s situation. MSS 142. 7 November 1950.

\(^{24}\) June wrote to Davis: ‘I had a letter telling me she was back the library, after a month in the Mental Hospital just for a rest.’ MSS 149. December/1950/January 1951.

\(^{25}\) This manuscript has no number, but is placed in the Angus & Robertson file between MSS 141 and MSS 143. 7 November 1950.

\(^{26}\) ibid.

\(^{27}\) MSS 143. 22 November 1950.
The following month, on 8 December 1950, June was admitted to Whangarei Hospital, suffering from a condition she informed Davis was ‘Hysterical Paralysis’. Writing from hospital, she described her symptoms and treatment, and indicated that Langley, via letters, had been most unsympathetic. June had held on to the cushion of manuscripts, and was expecting Langley to visit her at home sometime in April. She asked Davis if Langley had contacted her yet, as she had ‘sent your letter on’.28

Six months later, on 25 June 1951, Eve Langley wrote to Davis for the first time in ten years, with ‘profound apologies for not answering your letter of OC. [October sic] 1950. My sister sent it to me, only recently, and I have been waiting on my Remington and MSS, which have only just come down from the Northland.’ She was very enthusiastic about the prospect of the republication of her first book, and said that it was in demand at the library. ‘It gets praise of all sorts; a varied mixture of appreciation from all sections of the community. Mr Colgan, the sub-deputy chief librarian, is passionately fond of the book, really, and collects all sorts of data concerning it, and urges me to produce, like Keats, “more and yet more”.’29 She was living in Wellesley Street ‘up near my ancient haunt, the Old Windmill, which has been taken down, and leaves only a ghost of remembrance’. Significantly, she announced that she had another book ‘practically ready’, called ‘White Topees’. She described the book as ‘the hilarious adventures of a tea-planter from the islands, who started an experimental plot of tea-plantation in Gippsland’. She said she thought the book ‘quite good’, and offered to send it over to Davis ‘if you are interested in it’.30

Davis took two months to reply, but when she did, she expressed the strongest interest in seeing the manuscript of ‘White Topees’ at once. I like your description of it as “hilarious”, since humour is so sadly rare amongst our writers, and I look forward immensely to reading it’.31 However Davis was not, after all, optimistic about the reprinting of *The Pea Pickers*: ‘there would certainly be no hope for 1951’, although she praised the book highly. *The Pea Pickers*, she said, ‘is a delicious book, and we think there has been nothing quite like it before or since’. Davis emphasised her hope for ongoing communication, and invited Langley to ‘write again if you have the time and feel in the mood. It seems hard, after so wide a hiatus, to start off again on the closer footing of exchanging ideas. So perhaps you will help me by beginning.’

Davis also wrote to ‘Blue’ on the same day, expressing, in her salutation, an intimacy that she did not seem to achieve with Langley until after their first meeting in Sydney in 1956. It had been nine months since her last letter to June, and Davis described her astonishment and delight at hearing from Langley, ‘and have replied to her, asking her to show me the manuscript of White Topees which she says she has completed’.

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28 MSS 149. n.d. The letter was completed in early January, following June's discharge from hospital.
29 Wynne Colgan had begun his career as a clerical cadet with the Auckland City Council before being mobilised by the army in 1941. He was discharged in 1946, also gaining a Degree the same year with majors in English and history. Colgan gained a Diploma from the Library School in Auckland in 1947 and in 1948 assumed responsibility for the municipal reference library in the town hall. In February 1951 he was appointed reference librarian. Colgan, Wynne. *The Governor's Gift: The Auckland Public Library 1880-1980*. Richards Publishing and Auckland City Council. 1980. P. 129. Colgan later wrote a history of the library.
30 MSS 145. 25 June 1951.
31 MSS 147. 23 August 1951.
Davis expressed cautious optimism that 'the association will continue and perhaps bring forth further published works'.

June wrote back in September 1951 with an extensive missive of over 2,000 words. She was pleased to hear news of her sister, since Langley had not responded to her previous two letters, and was interested in the new manuscript. June 'faintly' remembered 'something written in the Hospital with an Indian or East Army flavour'. There was more talk of June's health and personal circumstances. She had, it turned out, returned Langley's manuscript and typewriter through the Public Trustee, following a letter from Langley's solicitor. Relations between the two sisters were obviously strained, although Langley herself never mentioned it. Unlike June, Langley rarely made reference to her personal history or relationships, although she was quite happy to comment on day-to-day matters.

Sometime in September 1951, Langley wrote again to Davis. 'Dear Beatrice Davis, You have made me very happy to think that you want White Topees at once'. The book, she said, was only just finished, ('meaning that the one draft is here') and would take about three weeks to retype. Her work at the library meant that she could only attend to her writing at night. She had also begun another book called 'Ben Hall'. Langley was very pleased that contact with Davis had been re-established: 'How splendid it is to hear from you again. Nearly 10 years!' She said she had 'a lot of manuscript', and could see herself working on Australian novels 'for the next ten years'. Davis responded positively in early October, and expressed her confidence in Langley: 'I know you have the talent'.

Langley was very busy travelling, painting, and writing poetry, in addition to her library work, and the retyping of 'White Topees'. She had visited Coromandel in May, where she had a launch to maintain, and was planning a trip to Rotorua. It was her method to take an exercise book with her on her expeditions, and fill them with impressions of her journeys. Langley called her Coromandel notebook 'A notebook holiday on Coromandel', which is a curious choice of phrase. She did not have a holiday; she had a notebook holiday; a holiday experienced through her notebook... She was, in addition, inspired by manuscripts in the Library, and had been executing watercolours ('my passion') to accompany her prose and poems. She expressed the hope that a publisher might consider bringing out an edition of her writing and painting, and on 15 October 1951, forwarded ten poems for Davis's consideration.

32 MSS 151. 23 August 1951.
34 Thwaite. op. cit. says this was 'most likely the missing manuscript of 'Ship Me Somewhere East of Suez' on which Angus & Robertson submitted a report. The manuscript itself is nowhere to be found.' p. 425. However, in MSS 351. 12 May 1955, Langley refers to the writing and submission of this manuscript.
35 MSS 155. n.d. [Probably September 1951].
36 MSS 157. 2 October 1951.
37 MSS 159. 15 October 1951.
38 See Langley, Eve. 'A notebook holiday in Coromandel', 10 May — 6 June 1951. Mitchell Library: Sydney. ML MSS 4188 (2) Item 3. A small booklet, handwritten in tiny handwriting in grey pencil, describing people, places, activities...
39 Davis wrote to both Langley (MSS 165. 9 November 1951.) and Kenneth Mackenzie, editor of Angus & Robertson's own anthology of Australian Poetry (MSS 167. 9 November 1951.), discussing
Coincidently, Davis wrote that very same day to June, and amidst discussion of other topics, offered to keep her in touch with her sister’s activities: ‘I shall always let you know if I have any news of her’. The relationship between Davis and June was an interesting one. June had clearly engaged the sympathies of her sister’s editor, involving herself in Langley’s professional life in an intrusive and ultimately damaging way. Both Davis and June were aware that they were exchanging sensitive information about Langley and shared an understanding that they would not make that known to her. Davis at one point observed: ‘I felt it would be better for her not to know that I had enquired of her from you and that you had written telling me so much.’ To which June replied: ‘Let me be the only one to be ashamed to have as you truly say “told you so much”.’ They continued to send each other news of Langley’s affairs, although much of their correspondence was taken up with June’s own concerns.

In her Christmas greeting to Davis in December 1951, Langley reported that her friend, the editor of the Bulletin’s ‘Red Page’, Douglas Stewart, had accepted one of her poems for publication. Douglas Stewart was very fond of Langley, and a great admirer of her work. He was someone who ‘took the trouble to find out what people really were aiming to do’. She described herself as on ‘the very last lap of WHITE TOPEES’, but intent on holding on to it until the New Year. She had been working on it, and ‘cut it a good deal; a lot of matter that wasn’t of any interest except to growers’. Curiously, she explained: ‘My husband would like to run through the book before I send it over. He is a lecturer out at the Teacher’s Training College at Epsom, and his criticisms are usually reliable. So I shant [sic] be sending the MSS over until New Year 1952.’ There is no explanation as to why Langley might be engaged in an ongoing dialogue with Hilary Clark. Her comments indicate that they had accepted their separation, and were maintaining some kind of interaction. However at this point, he largely disappears from the narrative, as does June. Langley referred to neither in any substantial way, and neither did Beatrice Davis raise with Langley the poems Langley had sent (which she had described to June as ‘several very nice pieces’). See also MSS 157. 2 October 1951.

40 MSS 161. 15 October 1951.
41 MSS 139. 26 October 1950.
42 MSS 142. 7 November 1950.
43 MSS 171. 10 December 1951.

Douglas Stewart was born in Auckland, coming to Australia in 1933. He returned to New Zealand in 1934, visited England in 1937 and came back to Australia in 1938, to take up an appointment as assistant to the editor of the Red Page of the Bulletin, Cecil Mann. Wilde, William H., Joy Hooton and Barry Andrews. editors. The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature. Second Ed. Oxford University Press: Melbourne. 1994. ‘...the three people in my life...who have conveyed to me an impression of genius...Eve Langley and one was John Cowper Powys in Dorset in England, one was Norman Lindsay, and all those people seemed to me to be something quite beyond the ordinary...it was a kind of inner radiance, and intensity of fire, of vividness that came out of them so that you felt as I already had in Eve's writing...somebody beyond the ordinary.’ Stewart, Douglas and Beatrice Davis. Interview with Meg Stewart. 'The Shadows are different; An Appreciation of Eve Langley.' op.cit.

45 Dobson, Rosemary. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. 1975. TRC 327, NLA.
46 Langley usually did not bother with the apostrophe in conjoined words, and this stylistic feature has been retained where it occurred.

47 Ruth Park observed that she could ‘recall no single occasion when Eve mentioned June to me’. Park, Ruth. Letter to author. 5 July 1999.
nature of her discussions with June. Whether Langley ever found out what June had written is a matter for conjecture, but several years later Langley indicated that her relationship with her editors was being undermined by their knowledge of her personal history, and perhaps she suspected the source. At the end of 1951 it is apparent that Langley was willing and capable of resuming her professional career. Her relationship with Beatrice Davis was firmly re-established: Davis expressed confidence that Angus & Robertson would continue to publish her work; Langley was equally confident that she would continue to be productive in her creative endeavours.
Chapter Two

1952

Throughout Langley’s life, there were years that were characterised by frenetic activity and energy, and 1952 was one of them. She was involved in extensive consultations over the editing of White Topee, and began her next book (she always envisaged and described her manuscripts as ‘books’) ‘Wild Australia’, which she was working on in August 1952, and had completed by February 1953. The Angus & Robertson letters track the editorial process of the production White Topee, which is particularly important, given that the correspondence concerning The Pea Pickers is missing from the Angus & Robertson archive.

To have to edit a work by correspondence was a compromise for Beatrice Davis. During an interview in 1977, she observed: ‘Every now and again, as in dealing with Eve Langley, there is a lot of careful work to be done, and it’s much better if the author is physically in the same town and place as the editor.’ Davis found it difficult to have to suggest changes and offer criticism when ‘the author does not know you at all. It seems impertinence that a mere editor who has never written a line...would suggest to a writer that the work could be better.’ Xavier Herbert was another whose work Davis edited principally through extensive correspondence. Alec Bolton, who worked as an editor at Angus & Robertson from 1950-1960, recalled that she was ‘always corresponding with Xavier Herbert up in Queensland who was wrestling to produce these great works of his and writing long letters to her demanding sympathy, which she supplied.’

Angus & Robertson always provided edited manuscripts to the author for approval as a matter of ‘courtesy and policy, and as an insurance against excessive proof

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1 Angus & Robertson: correspondence and Readers’ Reports: Langley, Eve. Mitchell Library. ML MSS 3269/47. MSS 69-631. MSS 227. 3 August 1952. All future references to the Langley documents that are contained under this file will be referred to using the MSS number within the file and the date.
2 MSS 253. 19 March 1953.
3 Anemaat, Louise. (Manuscripts Section, State Library of New South Wales). Letter to author. 25 August 1999. ‘The collection located at ML MSS 3269 is the second consignment of records from A & R...and includes early business records from the 1880s, and publishing records from about 1933 until the mid 1970s...[I]t is a very extensive collection [the list of files runs to 156 pages] which was purchased by the Library from A & R in 1977...the Library can only be certain about the material it has received and can have no way of knowing in what ways the originating firm may have culled, destroyed or misplaced material in the years before the files were transferred to the Library.’
4 Davis, Beatrice. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. 19 May 1977. TRC 527 ANL.
5 He dedicated his novel Soldiers’ Women to her.
6 Bolton, Alec. Interview with Heather Rusden. 11,14,24 October, 7 November 1996. TRC 3523 ANL.
correction'. The relationship was seen to be a sensitive one, and the aim was to get the author to do the changes. Generally, this was achieved fairly informally in Davis’s office ‘unless you paid them the compliment of going out to their place’. She would have a ‘general talk’ with the author before supplying a marked up copy or list of queries to take away and consider. It was a process of ‘grooming’ a manuscript for its ‘public appearance as a book’. This meant — among other things — ensuring typographical conformity to the house style (‘the roast-and-boil of editorial work’); altering, where necessary, inappropriate words or clumsy expression (‘this is where editing really begins and where judgment and skill are called for’), and acting as ‘the firm’s guardians against obscenity and libel’.

There was also another layer of editing that Davis referred to as ‘creative editing’; an approach, she noted, was exemplified by Maxwell Perkins, an editor at the American publisher Scribners. Perkins nurtured the significant talent of authors such as Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Thomas Wolfe. A creative editor, noted Davis, ‘was prepared to go to no end of trouble and effort to see that they expanded and crystallised [the author’s] talent.’ It was this kind of editing that she felt Langley warranted. But it was a process reserved for a select few. Ruth Park, another Angus & Robertson author, who, incidentally, does not allow any editorial interference, said that the relationship between Davis and Langley was a “one off.” The ‘grooming’ of the manuscript was negotiated progressively through a series of questions, suggestions and corrections over quite a long period of time. Beatrice Davis was under the impression that Langley was unstable, and perhaps this careful approach was thought necessary.

Early in 1952, Davis wrote to Langley to say how anxious she was to see ‘White Topees’. She was going away on 25 March ‘and should naturally like to see it before I go’. Failing this, Davis asked Langley to send the manuscript to Nan McDonald, ‘a firm admirer of your work and you can be sure that she will be both appreciative and understanding’. Langley replied promptly that she was sending it the next day (30

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8 ibid. Further information about the editorial process can be gleaned from Fragment, the house magazine put out by Angus & Robertson and Halstead Press between 1954 and 1959. In the August 1956 issue, Beatrice Davis wrote a piece called ‘The Editorial Department’, which came under a broader heading (the article was intended to be part of a series) ‘The Making of a Book’.
9 Davis, Beatrice. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. op. cit.
10 ibid.
11 ‘I don’t mind being asked if this or that wouldn’t be better if changed, but my general principle is that if a literary work by a professional is so bad it requires a second person with no literary talent to rewrite bits of it, then it should be rejected out of hand.’ Park, Ruth. Letter to author. 5 November 1999.
12 ‘Beatrice was exceptionally kind to certain writers, mostly young men, such as Ken Cook and Tom Hungerford, but she would not have wasted as much time on them as she did on the regrettable White Topee.’ ibid.
13 MSS 173. 21 January 1952.
January 1952), although the manuscript, travelling by boat, took nearly a month to reach Angus & Robertson.

In the event that ‘White Topees’ was not accepted for publication, Langley asked that it be returned to her private address, at 11 Liverpool Street in Auckland, rather than to the Public Library, where her letters had previously been sent. ‘White Topees’ had been written during her time at the Library, and the staff had been very encouraging. She wrote: ‘I’d feel sad if it landed back on us all, bringing about a sort of emotional slump. For you know the magic things that books are. They either make or mar you.’ Davis replied that she did not think it likely that they would need to return the manuscript. ‘We shall not only treat the book sympathetically, but shall receive it with hope and enthusiasm.’

Just prior to her departure, Davis wrote a quick note to Langley to say that she had read ‘White Topees’ with great pleasure. She noted ‘those characteristically brilliant passages that I have come to expect from Eve Langley’, and said that Angus & Robertson would publish it ‘perhaps after slight cutting if you will agree’. She recommended Nan McDonald to Langley as ‘a brilliant editor’ who would be able to ‘help a lot’ and said to expect a letter from her.

Although editing via correspondence was not Davis’s preferred method, it probably suited Nan McDonald perfectly. She was, according to Davis, ‘so self-effacing that you could scarcely ever get her to interview an author herself’. One can only speculate as to why Davis did not resume her role as Langley’s editor following her return in mid-November, although she was consulted regularly after this. Nan McDonald was a poet, and a senior member of Angus & Robertson editorial staff. She joined the firm in 1943, engaged by Davis as her assistant. A university graduate, McDonald was also, according to Davis, ‘a land girl’, who had worked on a pig farm during the war. She was very highly regarded at the firm; indeed she was very highly regarded generally, and considered by many – including Beatrice Davis – to be the

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14 MSS 175/177. 29 January 1952.
15 When the manuscript had not arrived three weeks later, Davis wrote again, expressing her concern that she ‘receive it and read it and write to you again’ before her departure. MSS 179. 22 February 1952. Another letter from Langley asked if the manuscript had arrived yet. MSS 181. 27 February 1952. The publisher received the manuscript of ‘White Topees’ on 25 February 1952. MSS 179. 22 February 1952 (handwritten note).
16 MSS 175/177. 29 January 1952.
17 MSS 179. 22 February 1952.
18 MSS 189. 19 March 1952.
19 Nan McDonald was born on December 25 1921, daughter of W. J. McDonald, Eastwood, NSW, and educated at Hornsby High School and Sydney University. She was on the staff of Angus & Robertson from 1943 to March 1973, when, along with Beatrice Davis, Elisabeth Hughes and John Tranter she was given notice. She was included in Who’s Who in Australia in 1965. Her publications included Pacific Sea 1947 (Grace Leven Prize, 1948), The Lonely Fire (1954), and The Lighthouse (1959). McDonald was Editor of Australian Poetry in 1953 (a task which caused substantial distraction from the editing of ‘White Topees’).
20 Davis, Beatrice. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. op. cit.
21 MSS 239. 14 November 1952.
22 ‘Books in Production at Halstead’ Fragment. op. cit. No 1, May 1954. p. 11.
best book editor in Australia. She was, said Davis, ‘the most brilliant editor as well as the most charming person...she had a most marvellous feeling for style, for prose...any sensitive job that demanded a good writer to be made even better, I’d always think of Nan McDonald as the right person, with the imagination, the intelligence, the knowledge to do that sort of job.’ Hal Porter provided a lyrical description of McDonald in his autobiography *The Extra*: ‘She looks like what one expects a poetess to look like: graceful, pale, stilled, as tall and serene as a Parmigiano Madonna.

All the senior editors were expected to oversee the entire process of preparation of a manuscript for printing. They would make recommendations as to what was feasible for publication, check factual information and consistency of style (the standard was Oxford University Press according to Alec Bolton), and advise authors about such things as form (in the case of a novel), or chapter length. But editors also specialised in certain areas, and Nan McDonald took on ‘anything imaginative, and anything historical – she had tremendous knowledge’. She also did most of the poetry.

The poet Rosemary Dobson, who worked in the Angus & Robertson editorial team from 1946 to 1953 (although she continued on as a Reader after this time), held McDonald in very high regard. ‘Nan had a tremendous feeling for literary quality; she was a most sensitive book editor, and Beatrice, who [had] all the capability in the world...felt that Nan was better with the books that had literary quality.’ Dobson enjoyed Langley’s writing, and shared several of her interests, including a love of Greek mythology and literature. Like Langley, she liked to create links between early Greek and modern life: ‘if you try relating Greek myth to modern life, it can be very amusing and it can come off.’ Clarity of thought and expression were important to

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23 ‘Beatrice Davis...may also have been its best editor, although she herself reserves that accolade for one of her first assistants – the poet Nan McDonald...’ ‘The invisible mender behind the words.’ *The Herald.* 26 February 1974. p. 23.
24 Davis, Beatrice. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. op. cit.
26 Bolton, Alec. Interview with Heather Rusden. op. cit.
27 Davis, Beatrice. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. op. cit.
28 Dobson, Rosemary. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. 1975. TRC 327 ANL.
29 Rosemary de Brissac Dobson was born in 1920, and educated at Frensham School, in Mittagong, New South Wales. She was initially published as a poet during the 1940s, coming to the attention of Douglas Stewart, who was editor of the *Bulletin* at that time. She began work as an editor at Angus & Robertson in 1946. Later, she married fellow editor Alec Bolton. Dobson left A & R in 1953 to begin a family. Dobson sometimes initialled her Readers’ Reports as RD, and on other occasions as RB. However, as she is known in her professional life as Rosemary Dobson, this is the name I shall use. Dobson read a number of Langley’s manuscripts submitted during the 1950s, including ‘Wild Australia’.
31 Dobson, Rosemary. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. op. cit.
32 Dobson wrote many poems about Pausanias, who she saw as ‘the first Greek travel writer...’ and travelled to Greece at least three times. On her first trip, Dobson ‘went totally overboard for Greece and felt full of it all the time’. She wrote an early poem about Theseus coming to Athens, and based it on Pausanias’s account. Dobson was conscious of the parallels this story had with perceptions of youth in her own time. Dobson, Rosemary. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. op. cit.
her, and she felt very strongly that an author should never lose sight of the fact writing was an 'act of communication'.

McDonald and Dobson submitted readers' reports on 'White Topee', and were largely in agreement as to its virtues and shortcomings. McDonald summed up her position in the first sentence: 'This novel, pruned and condensed, would certainly be worth publishing. It is written with Eve Langley's characteristic brilliance and originality, and no one else could have written it. But I am afraid that no amount of editing will be able to make it as good as The Pea Pickers.' She commented on its 'shapelessness' and the absence of opportunity in the narrative to introduce 'the rich variety of characters met with in the earlier book'. The report also referred to the introspective nature of the narrative, before targeting some specific editorial concerns. Dobson observed that the book suffered in its inevitable comparison with The Pea Pickers: 'If one had never read The Pea Pickers one would have hailed 'White Topees' as a book of extraordinary character, and quite outstanding in style, imaginative power, and interpretation of scene. It is like no other book I can think of except The Pea Pickers.' Both readers recommended publication, although Dobson had some misgivings: 'With some writers it might be better not to accept a second novel that is very like the first and inferior to it. But in this case we may never see a third, and there are very few writers of Eve Langley's quality — even her second best quality.'

Eve Langley's correspondence with Nan McDonald covered a period of just over five years, from 1952 to 1957. McDonald and Langley addressed each other formally, using their full names, but the tone was warm and respectful. McDonald's approach was one of conciliation and negotiation, although she seldom waivered in her opinions, and she was very focussed. She was also very methodical. McDonald raised specific concerns in each letter, whilst maintaining a dialogue on issues raised previously. As the letters went back and forth, views were exchanged until all was fully resolved. The negotiations about the title, for example, occurred between May 1952 and March the following year. Others issues were more quickly disposed of. Langley was direct and articulate in her responses and engaged positively in the process. She consistently yielded to McDonald's authority as editor. There were many delays, foreshadowed by McDonald in her first letter: 'You will naturally be

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33 MSS 191/193/195/197/199. n.d.
34 MSS 191. n.d.
35 The title of 'White Topees' was problematic, and the ending failed to conclude the main themes of the book. The names of characters were inconsistent with those of The Pea-pickers, and there was the question of libel from individuals still living. There were quotes that were too long — extracts from opera, songs delivered in full, expansive selections of Italian — and misquotes, particularly from the bible. It was necessary to shorten the overall text, remove distracting digressions, and condense overwritten scenes. Inconsistencies had to be addressed, most notably the love scene between Steve and Macca.
36 MSS 195. n.d.
37 MSS 193. n.d.
38 McDonald's final letter to Langley was in January 1957; Langley's in August of that year.
39 Nan McDonald (or Miss McDonald) and Eve Langley (or Miss Eve Langley).
wondering when the book will appear. I’m afraid I can’t give you a definite date at present, but it will almost certainly be some months away.  

It is implied in the Thwaite biography – where the production of *White Topee* is briefly discussed – that the editorial process was a long drawn out affair, chiefly on account of Langley (see Chapter 3). However, Nan McDonald noted on no less than seven occasions that she had been preoccupied with other matters – including a substantial new edition of the *Australian Encyclopedia* – or away on holidays, and unable to work on the book. She was also consulting with Beatrice Davis and Rosemary Dobson, so the process was inherently complicated. Close looks at the dates of the letters also indicate that Langley always responded promptly.

The manuscript of ‘White Topees’ was sent on January 29 1952, and Beatrice Davis received it on February 22. Nan McDonald began writing to Langley in May 1952, (although she had clearly been working on the manuscript prior to this); discussions with Langley were concluded by the first of October 1953, and the proofs were

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40 MSS 203. May 1 1952.
41 ‘Once again I must explain my silence on *White Topee* [sic] by the fact that I have been interrupted and diverted to tiresome jobs, much less interesting but considered more urgent by the powers that be. At the moment we are all painfully involved in the upheaval caused by bringing out a new edition of the *Australian Encyclopedia* – a vast undertaking’. MSS 249. 12 March 1953.
42 ‘Once again I must apologise for a long silence, but for the past two months I have had to drop everything and concentrate on a large and complicated work that was urgently required for production. So, unfortunately, ‘White Topees’ has progressed very little since I last wrote.’ MSS 221. 25 July 1952.
43 ‘This note is written in haste; I have been away in Queensland and have not yet caught up with the work that accumulated here while I was basking in the sun eating mangoes, custard apples, papaws, and peanuts.’ MSS 259. 24 June 1953.
44 ‘This is just a note to let you know that ‘Wild Australia’ has arrived. I am looking forward to reading it as soon as I have time. I shall be away for the next few weeks so I shan’t be able to read it properly until I return.’ MSS 267. 23 September 1953.
45 MSS 219. 16 April 1952.
46 MSS 631. 1 October 1953.
ready in early April 1954. So negotiations actually took place over a period of less than 18 months. According to Ruth Park, Angus & Robertson 'always liked a full year if possible between the reception of a manuscript and the appearance of a book'. The production of Xavier Herbert's book *Soldiers' Women* took longer: 'It was two years after concluding the writing of it, the long writing of it, that I read the galley proofs.'

After receiving a letter in mid-March from Beatrice Davis advising her that McDonald would be in touch, Langley waited nearly a month, then initiated her first contact with the editor who would oversee the production of her second novel, and the last to be published in her lifetime. The letter was dated 16 April 1952. 'I looked forward to your letter,' she wrote, 'but since it hasnt arrived yet, I feel I should write and see what you think about the book. Reading your poem 'The Colleagues' in Jindyworobaks I am sure of your competence as editor, and feel that you could bring an entirely new sense of editing to the work. So do please write and tell me what you think is needed.'

It was another fortnight before an apologetic McDonald responded: 'I am sorry I have taken so long to write, but I was away myself for a few weeks following Beatrice Davis’s departure, and have only just returned.' She was very complimentary: 'I must thank you... for the great pleasure of reading the novel. We struggle through such acres of dreary manuscripts here, that when we can plunge into one like 'White Topees' we feel like the children of Israel coming out of the wilderness into the land flowing with milk and honey.'

These initial letters set out the correspondents' views about editing. Langley volunteered that the book needed some work: '...as I was writing it, I did think, several times, This book could do with a little editing and cutting.' She invited McDonald to freely exercise her editorial judgement: 'I only want to say that I am more than willing to let you have an absolutely free hand with the book, and just do what you will with it.' In particular, McDonald should excise those parts that lacked vitality and veracity. 'Now, I do hope you can get to work as with a rapier and slash away at what you don’t like, or what you think is slow and holds the reader up at all, or any little thing that doesn’t feel living to you.' Responding to Langley’s desire that the language and ideas should have an ‘immortal, living’ quality, McDonald expressed the hope that the work as a whole might flourish under her judicious pruning:

First I must thank you for your letter, and for your very generous comments on the cutting of the book. I don’t look forward to the pruning process; it is always hard to sacrifice some of the little incidental blossoms, though you know it will benefit the shape of the whole. I shall keep in touch with you about what is being done.

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47 MSS 295. 8 April 1954. 'The proof reading department will be sending you proofs of *White Topee* this week.'
49 Herbert, Xavier. Interview with Hazel de Berg. 12 July 1961. ANL
50 MSS 219. 16 April 1952.
51 MSS 203. 1 May 1952.
52 MSS 219. 16 April 1952.
53 MSS 203. 1 May 1952.
McDonald identified the book's title and the ending as the places to begin. Clearly not keen on the title 'White Toppees', McDonald probed the author's commitment to maintaining it. She wrote: 'I would like to know how you feel about the title — whether it is the name the book was born with, an integral part of it from the beginning, or whether it is a name that it has acquired and that could be altered without violence.' She suggested that the Angus & Robertson sales staff might come up with a more suitable one, 'based on their experience of “buyer re-action” to various types of title, and I should like to know your feelings on the matter'. 54

Langley replied promptly, with a spirited defence of 'White Toppees', arguing that it was indeed a title the book was 'born with'. 'A thousand thanks for your praise of the book...Regarding the title 'White Toppees': the white topee was indeed an integral part of the book of the days and the time in which the first notes for it, were taken. In fact the book began around the topee.' Langley explained in some length with her characteristically eclectic arrangement of ideas why the title was appropriate.

...I thought that, for dust jackets and covers, it would simplify things greatly for years and years. Since one has at one's command, where the artist is concerned, thousands of quite handsome heads that could fit into a solar topee and give the book the quality of birth. It makes to my mind, one long endless chain of shade and imagination from Khartoum to Kalulu; down through the years a long line of solar helmets and the great minds that have dreamed in their cool curve, the stuff that's made the Empire. Then again, the white topee is the symbol of the British raj all over the world. To our own detriment as a sparkling and brilliant empire (India and Africa through the raj have got something we shall never have, because of the large native population) we havent had enough of it. And then, I suppose it is the outline of a childish remembrance; for my first (remembered) schoolmaster, Mr Goonan of Fifield, a pale handsome young man always wore a tropical silk suit and a white topee, and wherever I have been, this symbol of the raj has followed me for some obscure reason.

So I hope, really, that you hold on to the title. A red headed young policeman who I know (always wears a white topee in the hot summer here in Auckland)... hopes the same. He likes the title very much. 55

The issue of the title was allowed to lapse for some time, and was taken up again in March 1953, 56 to be finally resolved in April 1954. 57 McDonald also raised concerns about the ending of the manuscript, which, in her opinion, failed to draw the threads of the story together. McDonald broached the subject in a way that encouraged collaboration while making clear what was required:

There was one thing that struck me as needing alteration and that was the ending, the last paragraph. Somehow it was unsatisfying — and not only to me, for it struck Beatrice and another of our readers in the same way. So I think it is worth your consideration. I shall give you my diagnosis of the trouble, for what it is worth. The concluding paragraph is entirely devoted to one theme or element in the novel; which for convenience may be called the tea-plantation theme, taking in 'White Toppees', empire building, etc. This is a very important (and very interesting) element in the novel, but in my opinion it does not dominate the work as a whole, and therefore when it is allowed to monopolize 58 the

54 ibid.
55 MSS 223. 19 February 1952.
56 MSS 249. 12 March 1953.
57 MSS 295. 8 April 1954.
58 MSS 203. 1 May 1952.
conclusion the effect is unnatural. ...I feel there should be an element more characteristically or natively Australian in the conclusion if it is to be a satisfying ending to the work as a whole. What do you think about it? Of course it is for you to decide. 59

In her response, Langley rambled.

Now you say again that the concluding paragraph in the book is devoted to the tea plantation, the 'White Topees' and empire building to the exclusion of the Australian earth and the old Australian ways. And that is true. But in the swimming delirium of those days, the white man and the British Empire were, like George Bernard Shaw’s pole, which he called God, the only things that stood firm; for Australia in 1928, was tottering in most splendid health toward economic collapse. She was falling in classic health toward an end. And in those days, sometimes, everything seemed to vanish before ones eyes, like chimera, all save the compleat Englishman...and God.

And as I indicate, God is the Compleat Englishman.

Transitory Australia and its set could not be relied on when set face to face with Time. Because it had only been Australia since 1600 odd, when the Spanish found it; and it has always seemed to be the most perilous of countries where Time is concerned.

I have seen most terrible Englands and countries of an antiquity, royalty and richness not possible known to history, spring like mirage from the red-soil plains around Forbes and Fifield. In 1940 odd, I saw the picture The Good Earth; that which took place in China. And the two Chinese farmers arguing over a horse seemed suddenly and with the most deathly intensity, to be standing not in China, but in outback Australia. The very trees of China seemed to be metamorphosed into Australian gum-trees, and the Australian earth and Australian skies were there but millions of years in age.

It was two months before McDonald wrote again: ‘Once again I must apologise for a long silence’. She had been caught up with a major project, and done virtually nothing with ‘White Topees’. ‘So, unfortunately, White Topees has progressed very little since I last wrote.’ She took up the issue of the ending, responding with great restraint: ‘Thank you for your most interesting letter. I shall read the novel again, and particularly the ending, in the light of what you have said.’ 61 Langley was pleased: ‘I was happy to get your letter and hear of your promise to re-read the book, with an eye on the ending.’ 62

Having begun her correspondence with Langley tackling the big issues of title and ending, McDonald proceeded to raise concerns about various other textual matters. She introduced them in a clear and conciliatory way and none appeared overwhelmingly difficult to resolve.

Comparing ‘White Topees’ with The Pea Pickers, McDonald noted that there were ‘confusing’ inconsistencies in the names of the characters. 63 For example, Macca was not referred to by his full name in The Pea Pickers, but it was ‘frequently used in ‘White Topees’.’ She also drew Langley’s attention to the potential for libel action if

59 MSS 205. continuing from MSS 203.
60 MSS 225. 19 May 1955.
61 MSS 221. 25 July 1952.
62 McDonald persisted, and when she raised the matter again in March 1953, a compromise was reached. MSS 227. 3 August 1952.
63 MSS 221. 25 July 1952.
real rather than fictitious names were used. 'If there are any names of living people in
the book we should know so that we can make sure there are not grounds for libel
action. I know that sounds ridiculous, but you would be surprised at the libels people
work out from chance references in novels. Generally it is safer not to use real names.
Would you let me know your ideas on this? I shall be writing again as other points
arise.'64 Langley confessed to being rather foggy on the names, as it had been twenty
years since she had last visited Gippsland. 'To the best of my belief, however, I don't
think anyone of the given names lives there; but, if you feel any doubt, you could cut
the surnames and give only the Christian names, as in Pea-Pickers [sic]. This, as you
say, wouldn't confuse the readers.'65 Later, she added, 'if any time, you want to change
the names etc, you are at liberty to do so. For, we live in a changing world, don't you
think?'66 There were several more exchanges over names, but the issues were
resolved amicably. McDonald wrote: 'I am glad that you are agreeable to making the
characters' names the same as in the Pea Pickers. The two books will always be taken
together, and I think that many readers of the Pea Pickers would feel that something
was missing if they met their old friends under different names.'67 These conciliatory
remarks were typical of the way in which Nan McDonald acknowledged the
resolution of issues: she deferred to the author, while bringing the issue to a neat
conclusion by stating the problem and solution.

In early August, Langley began her next manuscript 'Wild Australia': 'It's quite good,
and when it is finished...I shall send it over for you to read and enjoy, since I can tell
by your letters that you are like myself, a lover of the old days in Australia. And this
is about them.' She sent further errata for 'White Topees', and asked that Beatrice
Davis be reminded of the popularity of The Pea Pickers. 'There is always a scramble
for the spare copies here and out at the branches...I would like the firm of Angus and
Robertson to know, anyhow, that the book is loved deeply over here and spoken of in
this country as a classic...It is always good to know that publishers have not worked
and worried for nothing.' She invited further editing of the novel 'if either you or
Beatrice Davis think that it could do with a bit of cutting, or pruning, in the light of
the years, and what they do to literature.'68

In her reply, McDonald acknowledged Langley's desire to have The Pea Pickers
reprinted but reminded her of the fiscal imperatives of the business world. She wrote
of the 'bread and butter books – school books, cook books, technical books' that
'keep[s] us alive', adding that 'we cannot keep nearly as many of our literary books in
print as we should like'. Continuing her dialogue on 'White Topees', McDonald drew

64 MSS 251. 25 July 1952.
65 MSS 227. 3 August 1952.
66 MSS 235. 13 October 1952.
67 'Am I right in presuming that Billy Brooker is the same as Billy Creeker? And Steve's racehorse,
Alpini II, in 'White Topees' is very like the mare Steve bought in the Pea Pickers (p. 398). Do you
think we should make it a mare in 'White Topees', too? I suppose Alpini would not do for a name
then.' MSS 239. 14 November 1952.
68 MSS 227. 3 August 1952.
Langley’s attention to inconsistencies in some of her quotations. She cited one biblical passage she had checked, only to discover ‘that the word ‘purple’ is not actually used,’ although the quote itself was ‘quite appropriate’. 69

Langley meanwhile was surging ahead with ‘Wild Australia’. She was half way through ‘and with what enjoyment I have written it’. The experience of writing was obviously an exhilarating one. ‘I write my books for myself, in lots of ways and love to read them again and again, and stare into them fascinated as though they were living faces.’ She referred to some land in the Waitakere Ranges, where she had a number of baches and a launch ‘all just a few feet off a green Conradiy tidal creek among a million mangroves’. 70 She had called it Cobar. Langley then produced an imaginative reconstruction of the prehistory of New Zealand and Australia. Ruth Park observed that this kind of ‘amazing material rose from her unconscious, working on half-remembered reading, speculation, and imagination’. 71

Again, Nan McDonald was forced to apologise as she described her attempts to write to Langley, her earlier efforts having been ‘brought to nothing by interruptions’. With Davis away, it had been ‘almost impossible to get a clear, uninterrupted stretch of time in which to tackle to problem of cutting as a whole. It is no use peeking at it in little snippets of time; one must feel the shape of the book as a whole’. She added that she had been through the book twice and highlighted areas for cutting, but that she would consult with Davis, who was due back in a few days time, before sending Langley the details. She raised some concerns about ‘puzzling’ inconsistencies in Macca’s declarations – and withdrawals – of love, which she found ‘difficult to reconcile…Perhaps I am being dense, but I should be glad if you would read the pages over and see if all is as it should be. I can see that there have been some alterations and erasures on p. 274, and perhaps some confusion has resulted.’ 72

McDonald proposed a small amendment to clarify the point. She explained that this particular scene was so important to the overall structure of the book ‘because it is decisive in the relationships of Steve and Macca. And that relationship has been a complex and subtle one, which needs to be defined at this point. Apart from the things I have mentioned, I think this definition has been brilliantly achieved…I hope you have been able to follow this rather involved screed.’ 73

Langley tried to explain in a letter on 8 December 1952, but her rationale was vague and imprecise; it was a question of ideal and earthly love, of both loving and not loving. Langley struggled, then turned the problem over to her editor. So long as the idea itself found some resolution in words, she was not overly fussed about the precise use of language: ‘I wonder if you yourself could fix this matter for me? Anything subtle could carry it over.’ 74

There was one matter, however, over which Langley had no wish to compromise. In December 1952, when the editorial process was well under way, she suddenly insisted

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69 MSS 231. 25 August 1952.
70 MSS 235. 13 October 1952. Baches were ‘a name peculiar to this country’; presumably shacks or shanties.
72 MSS 239. 14 November 1952.
73 MSS 241. continuing on from MSS 239. 14 November 1952.
74 MSS 245. 8 December 1952.
on including new material. At the time of writing, she had a cold, and was obviously feeling miserable and vulnerable at sharing this text.

Since I am taking the MSS of 'White Topees' down to be bound, I have been looking through it, and have decided to send over to you a part that is to me, its most important part. But which, being unusual, I thought I would leave out. It is a powerful piece of writing, but since it really is my own recollection of being born, or my "continuity of being" feeling which I have kept secret for years, I felt shy about sending it to you. I have always imagined that every single soul living on this earth, has, in some small way or larger way, perhaps, had this identical feeling...of continuity of being; which is, of course, at the root of our feeling of immortality. However, I have decided to send it over and hope you will incorporate it in the book, even if you have to cut out a lot of other matter to do so. This great picture of the continuity of my being has played such an important part in my life that I should like to see it printed on a large canvass full of backgrounds and dimensions of thought. But to tell you the truth it makes me feel so ill, sometimes, as though I had not been born, but had been found out in the bush, shanghaied, that I cannot bear to think on it for too long.75

Hal Porter later identified this particular incident in the book as an example of Langley's unusually powerful creative ability. 'In the White Topee, there is an incident in which Eve...gets into the situation of Oscar Wilde as a baby – it is eccentric and strange, but beautifully written and chillingly convincing, as if she really had been Oscar Wilde as a baby.'76

It was three months before Langley heard from McDonald again. In the meantime, Beatrice Davis had returned, and although Langley was keen for her input into the editing of 'White Topees', and Davis was consulted, she did not write directly to Langley. Nor did she write to June, who had sent an impassioned letter late in April, beginning 'Oh Beatrice! Beatrice!'77 June said she had just met up with Langley again 'after almost two sad and lonely years', and went on to describe the encounter. Her tale was embellished with memories and impressions, and statements about her relationship with her husband, and her health. June said she may include Langley's last letter (it is not on file), and inquired after the progress of 'White Topees'. She enclosed photographs of herself, and her horse, and signed the letter 'Blue'. Her assertive intimacy with Davis is in direct contrast to the tone of Langley's letters to her editors. June seemed to be trying to make herself the focus of attention in the Langley/Angus & Robertson relationship: she even wrote in a pretentious 'literary style' that seemed to mimic the narrative of Steve in The Pea Pickers.

Langley, meanwhile, gave no hint that she was aware of this ongoing dialogue between Davis and her sister. Her expectations of her editors were professional and

75 MSS 245/247. 8 December 1952.
77 MSS 183/185/187. n.d. This letter was begun soon after her trip to see Langley in early March, and dated halfway through as resumed April 20.
friendly. She was working hard on her writing and at the library, and in her last letter sent off Christmas and New Year wishes ‘to both of you’.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{78} MSS 247. 8 December 1952.
Chapter Three

1953

The editing of ‘White Topees’ was effectively concluded by the middle of 1953, although no date was set for publication. The new ‘continuity of being’ section that Langley had despatched the previous year appeared to have a relatively trouble free transition into the text. Nan McDonald was very busy, and wrote just four letters during 1953, writing expeditiously on editorial matters. Langley also wrote four letters, being similarly very busy writing, working and establishing her domestic life. She fully expected that ‘Wild Australia’ (which she completed in March) would be accepted for publication, and, after copying it out, sent it to her publisher on 1 September where it arrived three weeks later. Meanwhile she had begun two other books: ‘The Victorians’ and ‘Youth’.

But in February 1953, Langley was still waiting to hear a response on the “wild” continuity of being incident. She wrote at last ‘do you think it would look well under the White Topee? Please write and tell me.’ McDonald was not ignoring her; on the contrary, she had been working extremely hard and had reviewed the whole book. The following month, on 12 March, she wrote Langley a detailed letter explaining the overarching methodology behind the cutting and editing of the manuscript, which, as submitted, had been far too long. The principle concern was to maintain the integrity of the book – to ensure its ‘unity and continuity’. McDonald argued that it had to be cut ‘for economic reasons’, but emphasised that they didn’t want to ‘spoil it artistically’. The sections that were removed or condensed were those that fragmented the narrative: events or elements that were not ‘integral’ to the story (such as long citations from opera or songs, or commentaries and quotations that were not essential); or superfluous characters. McDonald was concerned, however, that the ‘numerous small cuts scattered throughout the book’ made it a time consuming and tedious job for Langley should she feel the need to check off each alteration. The original intention had been to send a precise list of all amendments. It was decided by the editorial staff, however, that Langley would get a better overall impression of the book by sending it to her as unpaged proofs, in which case it would not be ‘too late for you to put back anything you particularly want to stand’.

Referring to Langley’s ‘continuity of being’ passage, McDonald described it as ‘strange and fascinating’, and said ‘we felt it should go in’, but advised condensing

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1 Angus & Robertson: correspondence and Readers' Reports: Langley, Eve. Mitchell Library. ML MSS 3269/47. MSS 69-631. MSS 291. 1 September 1953. All future references to the Langley documents that are contained under this file will be referred to using the MSS number within the file and the date.
2 MSS 267. 27 September 1953.
3 MSS 243. 16 February 1953.
and simplifying it to avoid confusion among the more 'literal-minded readers'. (‘I must admit that I was confused myself at first reading,’ she added.) She offered Langley the final word on the matter: ‘You are the best judge of what is vital in the passage and what is not.’ McDonald dealt with the ending in a similar fashion, restating her concern that ‘there was not enough of Australia in it’. She drafted a passage that included phrases from an earlier letter, where Langley had explained her reasoning behind the title ‘White Topees’.

His white suit and white topee gleamed in the hard bright morning sun. The white topee! I saw down the years, from Khartoum to Kalulu, the long line of solar helmets and the great minds dreaming in their cool curve, and out of their dreams making an empire. And joining themselves to that line I saw our own dreams, and the tail we had given out of ourselves through this great ideal summer, the Australian summer that we had shared together and that now was ended.

She encouraged Langley to ‘improve on this’, adding that it was merely the ‘type of thing we need’. Almost as an aside, she asked Langley what she thought of ‘The White Topee’ as a title. At the beginning of this letter, which came to nearly 1,000 words, McDonald apologised yet again for her ‘silence on White Topees’. She had been ‘interrupted and diverted to tiresome jobs, much less interesting but considered more urgent by the powers that be’. This included the new edition of the *Australian Encyclopaedia*, ‘a vast undertaking’ (which, as it turned out, took 10 years to produce). In addition, two of her senior editors — Alec Bolton and Janet Bennett — were seconded to work on the project. McDonald also warned Langley that it might take some time to prepare the proofs, and said that the printing program for the year was ‘still undecided. Unfortunately there are a lot of books — text-books and so on — which must be out by certain dates or lose their market, and the creative books, which are timeless, usually have to wait.’

But Langley indicated that she was not at all perturbed by this scenario, and wrote back within the week saying ‘I was so happy to get your letter’. She dealt with all the issues raised by McDonald with brevity and economy. Regarding the title ‘The White Topee’ Langley wrote: ‘I think it is far better: Please let it be that’. She was in full agreement over the ‘continuity of being’ passage, adding a small amendment (‘but not if you don’t wish it’), and several explanatory comments ‘but you cut away as you like’. This contradicts the assertion by Joy Thwaite that the ‘continuity of being’ section presented great problems for Langley. Unfortunately, Thwaite uses as evidence a letter that is incorrectly attributed (See Chapter 4). Regarding the cutting of songs ‘and other things...I shan’t bother but leave it in your capable hands’. She enclosed another ending: ‘see if you like it as well as your own which you sent me, I mean, which you shaped for me’. The ending she produced ran thus:

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4 MSS 249. 12 March 1953.
5 MSS 223. 19 February 1952.
7 ’Beatrice eventually got three more staff: Elizabeth Wood Ellem, Marilyn Stacy and Eric Russell.' Barker, Anthony. *One of the First and One of the Finest, Beatrice Davis, Book Editor*. The Society of Editors (Vic). 1991. p. 25
8 MSS 253. 19 March 1953.
Alien among the beans, stood the lonely little tea-plantation, the dark, polished and desolate stranger to Australia.

There it lay, dark green on the yellow hill; moving up and down it were half a dozen Italians, looking over the bushes to see if there would be another picking before autumn. Ah, the feeling of that last nostalgic, frail, tired look-over; the worn weariness of the bushes quivered in my soul. McLachlan stood near the little tea factory watching them. His white suit and white topee gleamed in the hard bright morning sun. The white topee! I saw down the years, from Khartoum to Calulu, the long line of solar helmets and the great minds dreaming in their cool curve, and out of their dreams making an empire. And joining themselves to that line I saw our own dreams, and the toil we had given out of ourselves through this great ideal summer, the Australian summer that we had shared together and that now was ended. I thought of all the years I had given to Metung, and of Jim, and Blue, and Peppino, and Panucci, and the hard agony of life burnt in me with a great white fire, as once more with all of them I trod the bush track again to Creeker's turn-off. Once more, in my mind, I saw them walking before me like ghosts, talking in the half-sad, half-hopeful voice of humanity, the utterly kind simplicity of the great Australians, that strange gentle childlike emptiness of theirs, a people who loved the bush and work and old huts and few possessions, these silent peaceful poets of the earth. With one last sad tired look over the sunburnt head of Gippsland and deep into the fiesty blue eyes of it, the sea, I touched with my shoe the black slumber of the racehorse into the bright angry fire of life, and, remembering deeply within itself some set goal of long, long ago, it set out with long striding strong impatient steps to carry me towards the far-of Australian Alps. The black-and-white staghound ran ahead, and Gippsland fell behind.¹⁰

Nan McDonald was very happy with the new ending: 'it is just what was needed, I think, because it gathers together all the different elements in the book in a truly satisfying way'.¹⁰ To which Langley replied graciously: 'I am so glad you liked [it]...'¹¹ Langley was very busy when she dashed off her ‘note’ of 19 March addressing all the issues McDonald had raised about the manuscript. She was heading out to her bach on the following day to work on her launch and was ‘up to the neck with work myself,’ having finished ‘Wild Australia’ (‘a good book, fast moving, fantastic, and humorous’), and preparing to type out a copy to send over. She had started on her next piece called ‘The Victorians’ (‘about the Victorians; those that dwell in that part’) and was quite happy to ‘leave The White Topee to you’. She professed no expectations of receiving the proofs in the short term, given the pressure that McDonald was under.

Privately, however, she was feeling frustrated over the slow progress the book was making. In a letter to her sister she wrote ‘I’m still waiting for that blanky book to be published, but God Bless me, who cares?’¹² She was having some financial problems, including extracting her maintenance from Hilary Clark, and this partly related to her seeming affluence (despite the fact that she had no access to the money held by the Public Trustee).

Since I am, according to the magistrate, in a good position, and getting a salary of nearly £6 per week and have a section, two baches and a launch, a book to be published,
some money in the bank and a few hundred in the Trust, and drafting out another book for the publishers, he thinks I'm doing well...Anyhow, I hate being dependent on someone else's husband [a reference to Hilary's remarriage]. So there, old boy. And so would you.\textsuperscript{13}

As a consequence, she was working too hard, and feeling the effects of it. In addition to 'Wild Australia' and 'The Victorians', Langley also mentioned a manuscript called 'Youth'. 'So, its three books at once I'm doing. And that jaded, I am, I could fly the wicked land, and bloody shore, if you but threw me a glance...well, between these three hellish books and the typing of them and work I feel very happy, I don't think, but what is one to do? I don't know, I write for money, primarily, not glory. But I begin to think it must be glory after all that I'm working for, since I don't get much money for all my labor.' This letter demonstrates that Langley was able to separate her private feelings of frustration from her professional responsibilities. She fully understood the importance of maintaining a professional tone in her correspondence with her publishers, while feeling at liberty to be more casual in her comments to June. She was not to know that her confidence in maintaining this separation was misplaced. Her sister's very personal letters to Beatrice Davis had been filed in the publishing company's correspondence, and were thus blurring the boundaries Langley had herself constructed.

McDonald, meanwhile, was obviously relieved by Langley's response to her editorial comments, and followed it up with a request for poems, as she was also editing Australian Poetry for that year.\textsuperscript{14} Langley got back to her with some poems, and mentioned that the Ode she had included was 'to be sung by a 400 hundred voice choir in the Auckland Town Hall, next week, under the baton of Mr Claude Laurie, the Director the Auckland Choir'. She was at work 'drafting out WILD AUSTRALIA for you'.\textsuperscript{15}

In mid June, McDonald had returned from a sojourn to Queensland, where she had basked in the sun 'eating mangoes, custard apples, papaws, and peanuts'.\textsuperscript{16} She had a significant accumulation of work to deal with, but was pleased to receive Langley's poems. In August, Langley was still working on copying out 'Wild Australia', and was half way through 'The Victorians'.\textsuperscript{17} 'Wild Australia' was sent to McDonald on 1 September 1953,\textsuperscript{18} and McDonald acknowledged its arrival about three weeks later (23 September 1953).\textsuperscript{19} She was looking forward to reading it', but as she would be away 'for the next few weeks' would be 'unable to look at it properly' until she returned.

There was just one final problem with 'The White Topee' that had come to her attention: the matter of the Mistral. It provides a good example of McDonald's

\textsuperscript{13} MSS 253. 19 March 1953.
\textsuperscript{14} MSS 255. 30 April 1953.
\textsuperscript{15} MSS 257. 25 May 1953.
\textsuperscript{16} MSS 259. 24 June 1953.
\textsuperscript{17} MSS 261. 3 August 1953.
\textsuperscript{18} MSS 291. 1 September 1953.
\textsuperscript{19} MSS 267. 23 September 1953.
meticulous and serious approach to the checking of material for publication. Langley had referred to ‘the Mistral’, in such a way that it would be ‘taken to be the sea wind – as I always thought it was...it was really not a sea wind at all but a land wind, and apparently a rather unpleasant one’. McDonald consulted with Beatrice Davis, and made some small changes that she wanted to alert Langley to. Gracefully acknowledging her mistake, Langley delighted in her riposte:

The Mistral! Ah yes; I have such a great love for the Mistral! I think you have, too; perhaps everyone has. I knew it was a landwind, but wilfully forgot. I wish it could be left in, but perhaps we should wait and see. It is, as you say, a dangerous wind; but whenever I heard the name, the word Mistral, I think of one place only, of Dieppe, on the coast of France. I have a feeling that years ago there, a great yellow sandy wind ran out full of dust, from around Rouen and the Seine Inferieure and whirling along the golden beach dashed out into the blue sea, and trod its tops of foam and fire for miles, very dangerous, very beautiful. That is the Mistral to me. Therefore, seeing my mistral rush past me from Rouen into the sea full of earth and sand and storm and sea sweat, I feel I have described it rightly. For, because it is full of yellow dry sand, one doesn’t want it to rise out of the sea and be a sea wind, at all. I hope Mistral can remain. But we shall see. The Mistral is a late afternoon wind, I think.

The tone of her letters to her publishers during 1953 was relaxed, although she was clearly working at full tilt, and was understandably anxious about when *White Topee* would appear. The editorial process I have been analysing is far different from that described in Joy Thwaite’s account. In her biography, Thwaite referred to the editing of *White Topee* in the following way:

After a lengthy correspondence with Langley in the fifties, and under the magical and ‘agonised midwifery’ of Beatrice Davis* (footnote 62, Ruth Park, ‘Notes’ p. 5.) Nan McDonald and Rosemary Dobson, *White Topee* was finally ready for publication in 1954.

Thwaite says: ‘Her letters of this time show a tortured, confused and desperate personality battling more than the insecurity of the thirties.’ As I have demonstrated, Thwaite is wrong about the editing process and about the personality that comes through in the letters. Thwaite did not establish a chronology, particularly during the years after Langley’s release from hospital, and largely ignored the information present in the Angus & Robertson file that relates to the author’s professional life. The thrust of the biography is to ‘prove’ madness, and by a surreptitious – and undeclared – process of editing, Thwaite cuts dramatically through Langley’s life and seems to achieve her goal. However by sequencing the letters correctly, and accurately reporting on their tone and content, it is evident that although Langley was working at a frenetic pace, (and no doubt feeling under pressure as a result), she was...
determined to conduct a professional relationship with her editor. What is more, she succeeded.

The manuscripts Langley forwarded to her publishers were difficult to read (typed with single spacing on pink paper), and in need of a great deal of editing. That is undisputed. Anthony Barker in his biography of Beatrice Davis referred to McDonald ‘wrestling with the mess of material presented... for White Topee’. But Langley was not an isolated case in this regard. Davis herself acknowledged that manuscripts arrived in all sorts of states of readiness. Manuscripts ‘may be immaculate in all but a few details; [they] may be of the rugged, unkempt type that requires considerable treatment’. Alec Bolton noted that ‘lots of the manuscripts that were handled were in a fairly rough state and quite a lot of editorial work and rewriting was done.’ The picture of Langley as difficult to edit is retrospective anecdotal evidence and hearsay (Park’s comments are a good example) and comes from both Thwaite and Davis. It most likely stems from the circumstances surrounding the rejection of ‘Wild Australia’ (See Chapter 4). Davis’s interviews, for example, were conducted in the late seventies, and Barker’s book came out in 1991. This is between twenty and forty years after the event. It is therefore not surprising that the circumstances surrounding the production of White Topee came to be retrospectively intertwined with the furore over the rejection of ‘Wild Australia’. Both occurred within the space of a year, and there was a chronological overlap. Langley, however, maintained a separation between the two books as she was dealing with the issues surrounding the production of White Topee — and non-production of ‘Wild Australia’. The contemporary documentary evidence dealing with the editing of White Topee — Langley’s and Nan McDonald’s letters — contradicts the notion of a protracted, difficult ‘delivery’ due to an unpredictable ‘birth mother’, requiring ‘magical’ assistance from an ‘agonised midwife’, providing instead evidence of a cooperative author who was anxious to please.

The methodology used to extract this evidence was simple enough, if protracted. The letters were first keyed in from (the often poor) photocopies of the originals; sequenced correctly, and the editorial issues identified and tracked as they were discussed and resolved. This has provided a clear picture of the manner and circumstances in which the manuscript was edited. While Beatrice Davis may at the time have been under the misapprehension that Langley was struggling to maintain her sanity, there is no evidence that McDonald was of the same view. She was very preoccupied with many other matters at Angus & Robertson, and the firm itself was non-committal about a publication date for Langley’s book. Langley, in contrast, was buoyed — and lulled — by the confidence expressed in her work, if, at times, somewhat

27 Bolton, Alec. Interview with Heather Rusden. 11,14,24 October, 7 November 1996. TRC 3523 ANL.
28 The attributed comments to do not actually appear in the ‘Notes’ cited.
29 Many of the letters are out of chronological order, some are undated, and one was torn up and presented in fragments.
cynical about the effort she was putting in. She was deeply engaged in her writing, and totally unprepared for the rejection that would greet 'Wild Australia'. 
Chapter Four

1954

1954 was the most fraught and complicated year in the history of Langley’s correspondence with her publishers. The crucial events during the year were the rejection of ‘Wild Australia’, the publication and launch of *White Topee*, and the writing of ‘Bancroft House’. In constructing a chronological narrative of this period, difficulties arise because these three events overlap during April, May and June. The overlapping in itself caused confusion at the time, and in later assessments of Langley and her work, the confusion has turned into a serious distortion. In this chapter, my task is to unravel the tangled skein, and try to pick my way along each separate thread.

Although Langley’s first response to the rejection of ‘Wild Australia’ was intense and irrational, she recovered quite quickly – more quickly, it seems than McDonald, who was offended and stunned by Langley’s reaction. She refused, however, to be drawn into the deeply personal aspects of Langley’s letters, confining her comments to professional matters. The difficulties associated with ‘Wild Australia’ were largely resolved by the end of the year. But the consequences of Langley’s sentiments and actions stayed with her forever; having expressed her views on paper, these documents remained an indelible record on her file at Angus & Robertson. Her letters of this difficult time in April were available to be read by all who dealt with her professionally, and those who subsequently sought to recreate the circumstances of her life.

Establishing the sequence of events leading up to 8 April 1954, when Langley was formally advised of the rejection of ‘Wild Australia’ and the imminent arrival of the proofs of *White Topee*, is an important step in understanding the events of 1954. *White Topee* had been with Angus & Robertson since 25 February 1952, but although she had been notified of its acceptance by 19 March 1952, no contract formally committing the publisher to the book was sent until 21 January 1954. Even then, Langley was not told when it would be published until McDonald announced to her on 8 April that the book had been ‘set’. ‘Wild Australia’ was sent to Angus & Robertson on 1 September 1953 and Readers’ Reports were done on or around 30 September, but Langley received no feedback on the manuscript at all – despite writing three times requesting information¹ – until more than six months later, also on 8 April 1954. ‘Bancroft House’ was ‘written in a fortnight’, and completed on 10 May.

¹ *Angus & Robertson: correspondence and Readers’ Reports*: Langley, Eve. Mitchell Library. MSS 3269/47. MSS 69-631. MSS [no number]/273. February 6 1954. MSS 271. 22 March 1954. MSS 277. 30 March 1954. All future references to the Langley documents that are contained under this file will be referred to using the MSS number within the file and the date.
1954. Twenty letters in all were exchanged during 1954, of which Langley wrote thirteen.

It is a matter of conjecture as to why McDonald chose to link the rejection of 'Wild Australia' with the announcement of the imminent release of *White Topee*. Perhaps McDonald — for reasons of her own, or on the advice of Beatrice Davis — did not want to communicate the decision on 'Wild Australia' to Langley until the production of *White Topee* was effectively concluded. There is no way of knowing whether this patronising attitude — if indeed that is what it represented — was a good thing or not. There is also no evidence that Langley was unable to deal with both the publication of *White Topee* and the failure of 'Wild Australia' as two separate issues.

The contract was sent to Langley not by McDonald, but by Shirley Tebbut, an administration staffer in the editorial department who asked for the signed contract to be returned, along with a biographical questionnaire and publicity photograph. Langley's response to the request for biographical material was surprisingly lack lustre: 'I have done my best with the form to fill it in, but have nothing startling or provocative — only the same old stuff about myself, and it bores me horribly. Hope it doesn't bore you.' Perhaps aware that her response had been somewhat dry, she then sent off a letter to Nan McDonald on 6 February, adding more information. 'There was a form...which I filled in rather sparsely, but I don't seem to have anything in my life of Australia to tell. I did my best. But if you can get anything, subsequently, out of this letter to add to the publicity, do so.' She seemed distinctly uncomfortable with this formal publicity process that required greater transparency than she was used to delivering: 'I can't think of anything wonderful...I don't seem to be any good for publicity'. Later, however, she professed herself quite up to a more imaginative, elaborate selling of herself: '...am having a full length photo in fur coat and face taken tomorrow...Ah, to be able to do a spot of publicity on my most, fantastic self.

Langley's efforts at writing a 'straight' autobiographical narrative are notable for their lack of information and emotion. It is striking that although her life up to this point was to provide the substance for millions of literary words, its retelling (for marketing purposes at least) should prompt such flat, featureless language. This is in direct contrast to the eloquent and exotic language she used as storyteller. The dry style of delivery employed in the more prosaic task — for her — of 'autobiography', is substantially different in style to much of her other writing. Ruth Park says, 'I do

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2 MSS 305. 10 May 1954. See also MSS 337. 7 January 1955.
3 Shirley Tebbut was with Angus & Robertson in the publishing Department for more than four years, leaving (to be married) on 3 November 1954. *Fragment*, The House Magazine of Angus & Robertson and Halstead Press, No 1. May 1954. p. 20.
4 This questionnaire and Langley's response is not in the Angus & Robertson file.
5 MSS 293. 21 January 1954.
6 MSS 617. n.d.
7 MSS 271/273. 6 February 1954.
8 ibid.
9 MSS 277/279/[no number]. 30 March 1954.
10 'If I had done the most wonderful thing in the whole world, I still, to my own mind, wouldn't be any good for publicity. Perhaps because there is no such thing, really, as a public...yet.' MSS 273. 6 February 1954.
not remember her ever speaking directly of herself, her past, her intentions. She lived completely in the moment.\(^{11}\)

Langley was also insistent that McDonald respond to her request for information about 'Wild Australia'. After four months of uncertainty over its reception she needed to know what was to become of it.\(^{12}\) 'This short note is to ask to you about WILD AUSTRALIA. Have you read it, and do you like it?'\(^{13}\) Langley asked, before bringing McDonald up to date with recent news about her literary endeavours. She had been given a grant of £300 by the New Zealand Literary Fund,\(^{14}\) and expressed her happiness at being able to pursue her writing: 'I feel healthy and immortal when I act out the part of the *deus ex machina*, whatever happens at last'. The contract for *White Topee* had been signed in the presence of the Chief Librarian, Robert Duthie,\(^{15}\) and she was planning to have a photograph taken. She also noted in the contract a change in the title they had agreed upon, from 'The White Topee' to 'White Topee', 'and I liked the THE'. Langley was working full time at the Auckland City Library, and had shifted out to her property at Laingholm,\(^{16}\) which consisted of a house of four rooms, and land 50 by 150.\(^{17}\)

Six weeks later and still there was no response from McDonald. On 22 March, Langley wrote again about 'Wild Australia': 'Please write and tell me, soon, wont you? For I've suddenly begun to worry about the book. During the long hot drought we have had over here I've [sic] haven't bothered, for I've had this new bach of mine to think of and finally shift up into and arrange. But now Autumns come and I start to change and worry about my leaves; those that you have.\(^{18}\) She had shared the progress of *White Topee* and 'Wild Australia' with the library staff, and felt that they, too, were anxious for some result for her effort.\(^{19}\) Further, although she had five books on the go, she could not settle to her work: indeed, the books were 'half waiting on you to be written...and I wait on you for word on the book, what can I

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12 MSS 271/273/[no number]. 6 February 1954.
13 ibid.
14 Her application was supported by Pat Lawlor (1893-1979: journalist, editor and author, and New Zealand representative for the *Bulletin* 1932-1965 [NLA catalogue entry]. He was also Secretary of the Literary Fund.); Professor Edward Musgrave Blaiklock from the Classics Department at the University of Auckland; Gloria Rawlinson (poet and long time friend of Langley's) and Rawlinson's mother Rosalie. MSS 271/273/[no number]. 6 February 1954.
15 MSS 617, n.d. handwritten note.
16 MSS [no number]. 6 February 1954.
17 Langley described the property she purchased at Katoomba in May 1960, describing it as 'a house, 4 roomed and land, 50 by 150, same as here [Laingholm].' MSS 489. 14 May 1960.
18 MSS 271. 22 March 1954.
19 'My woes are the Library's woes, and many and patient and sad are the inquiries regarding Wilde Australia and The White Topee from Mr Duthie, the Chief-Librarian and Mr Colgan, his Deputy. We sadly and with sorrowful patience wait for our own book to arrive. For when one works on a staff with people, they have one's interests at heart, and a letter from Angus and Robertson seems suddenly to light and fill the place full of the fire of genius and happiness, and then we really do live and have a fresh interest in life. At present we are stagnantly lying in wallowing pools awaiting word from you regarding the ubiquitous Wild Australia.' MSS 271. 22 March 1954.
say? Niente.'

She added that she felt 'cold, sad, depressed and sick when I am not writing'.

The following week, on 30 March, she wrote to Shirley Tebbut. Most of the letter was taken up with describing the rather bizarre context for the photographs of herself that she had sent, but right at the beginning was a direct appeal for McDonald to respond to her manuscript. 'I cannot understand her long, long silence. Will you please ask her to write at once? I am anxious about the book.'

On 8 April 1954 McDonald finally told Langley that, after much discussion, Angus & Robertson was rejecting 'Wild Australia'. McDonald was thorough and explicit in her opinions about the manuscript, but not unkind. She noted that the book was not as good as either *The Pea Pickers* or *White Topee*. It needed a stronger plot; Steve's wild flights of fantasy were often irrelevant to the narrative; the Oscar Wilde theme was too dominant, and of 'dubious' value; there was a limited audience for this kind of material, and the chances of recovering costs on this manuscript were unlikely. McDonald concluded in an encouraging way, as was her wont, by telling Langley that there was a great deal that was good and salvageable, which might either find its way into another book, or alternatively, benefit from a thorough revision. Perhaps one of the most significant observations, in the light of Langley's overall career, is McDonald's comment, gently put, that Langley had lost sight of her audience. 'A writer who has lived with an idea and developed it and become thoroughly familiar with it often fails to realize how baffling it can be if it is presented without explanation to a reader, even an intelligent and sympathetic reader, who has not shared in these processes.' McDonald warned Langley that she was forgetting that her readers were not intimate with the ideas she was trying to express, and found it difficult to relate to some of her material as a consequence.

Having got the bad news out of the way, McDonald communicated the good progress *White Topee* had made: Langley should expect the proofs within the week. McDonald also acknowledged the arrival of the photographs Langley had sent to her, and followed up on the change of title from 'The White Topee' to 'White Topee'. She apologetically explained that an independent decision had been made by the sales staff to alter the title, and she had only just been made aware of it herself. Meanwhile, 'the blocks had been made, and an alteration would have been most expensive'.

Langley was devastated, and for the first time in her correspondence with her editors, she lashed out. Her reaction was extreme, and she instantly, it seems, penned a reply which, however, needs to be read in the context of her situation. Langley was

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20 ibid.
21 MSS 277. 30 March 1954.
22 'I am sorry about that "The" being dropped out of the title. I liked it, too, and did not know it had been altered until you asked about it and I made inquiries. By that time the blocks for the jacket had been made, and an alteration would have been most expensive. The sales staff considers the title is better without the "The", but I should have been told so that I could have referred it to you. It is one of those muddles that sometimes occur as a book goes from one department to another in the process of publishing, and everyone thinks someone else has been informed of what is happening.' MSS 295. 8 April 1954.
impoverished, and depending on that book, and the royalties from *White Topee*, which were so long in materialising. She expected ‘Wild Australia’ to be greeted with the same enthusiasm that *White Topee* had elicited. It seems probable that she had attained some status as a published author amongst the people with whom she worked, and the clientele at the Library, and they were aware that she had submitted her next manuscript. It was very humiliating to have now ‘failed’.  

Instead of maintaining her professional judgement and decorum she gave way to a tirade of appeal and abuse. Uncharacteristically, she referred to McDonald repeatedly as Nan. She wrote two letters over the next three days, and an addendum on the third day conveyed notice of her name change to Oscar Wilde. Her first letter was written on Monday 12 April as an immediate reaction to McDonald’s letter. Her response was all emotion, with little clarity, a situation perhaps due to the physical effects of substance abuse, apparent in her description of illness and ‘whirling of the brain’. On Tuesday she wrote again, and then officially changed her name by Deed Poll on the Wednesday to Oscar Wilde, writing yet more by way of explanation. Although in truth, very little is explained. There was also a third letter (undated, but written after she had received the proofs of *White Topee*) that dealt directly with the criticisms made by McDonald in relation to ‘Wild Australia’. It is this letter that has been used by Thwaite to support her argument that Langley reacted very badly over criticism of the ‘continuity of being’ section in *White Topee*. Langley did indeed discuss aspects of *White Topee* in this third letter, but not in the context that Thwaite says. The letter, filed in the Angus & Robertson correspondence is in fragments as if torn up but not thrown away. The three fragments of paper have MSS numbers 281, 285, 287; another two have neither manuscript number nor date. The fragment containing the salutation and date is missing. Joy Thwaite incorrectly attributed this letter to one written in March to Shirley Tebbut, when it is quite obviously written in April and to Nan McDonald; the letter addresses McDonald directly, and raises the matter of the proofs for *White Topee*.

The first letter that Langley wrote, on 12 April 1954 has been the focus of a great deal of attention – and an edited version constitutes the opening paragraph of the Thwaite biography. Thwaite does not acknowledge that she has cut the letter from 1,000

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23 MSS 269. 12 April 1954.


Thwaite’s version runs thus:

**AUCKLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY**

12 April 1954

Dear NAN McDonald,

I feel very ill. You are sending WILD AUSTRALIA back to me, I can scarcely believe it. Nan McDonald DEAR Nan McDonald; I AM OSCAR Wilde. AND YOU'RE KILLING ME. KILLING ME. Nan McDonald, dear Nan, please believe with your entire heart that it is I, OSCAR Wilde, still labouring and swinging about in the agony of my death pangs of fifty years ago who is imploiring and praying you to blive that the whole story is true. TRUE. I'm ill tonight. God, if you only knew the whole story. And when I get this book back, I'll be doomed again. And, look, Nan its no use talking about the Mental Hospital, because I told Dr Stevens there straight out, that I was OSCAR Wilde, and they kicked me straight out. And Dr even asked me how long I was in Australia from England, and believed me. And I hate being OSCAR Wilde, because NO ONE WANTS OSCAR
words to 350, creating an edited version that supports her contention that ‘Clearly [Langley’s] assumption of the Oscar Wilde persona was complete by 1953’. The letter is used to provide the ‘concrete’ evidence of Langley’s ‘madness’. Yet there is no evidence in any of the correspondence that Langley believed her own rhetoric in relation to Oscar Wilde. In future letters of rejection, of which she received several, there was no mention of Oscar Wilde: the rejection of ‘Bancroft House’ for example, arrived on 29 June 1954 addressed to Eve Langley. By 24 May 1954, she was back to signing her name as Eve Langley on her letters to her publisher, although ‘Oscar Wilde’ occasionally resurfaced.

Several observations can be made about the production of the letter of 12 April. Langley said she was writing at night in her bach in the dark (the electricity was not connected until April 28), and the letter shows signs of having been edited by the author for typographical errors. As Langley did not normally make many mistakes in her typing, this would indicate that she had indeed been typing without a light, and that it was only on a further reading the next day that she noticed the errors. She seemed to be trying to express something about the Mental Hospital, but focussed on the references to the Oscar Wilde theme. The letter was largely incoherent, but Langley knew she was dependent on McDonald to ensure the publication of White Topee, and begged that her letter and views on ‘Wild Australia’ not compromise its production. A handwritten addendum was added, and it had a quite different tone to the rest of the letter: it contained a reference to White Topee, and has an attitude of defiance. ‘The White Topee does marvellously well at the Library, they think the Oscar Wilde part of best of all. Franscine fine.’ What is most intriguing is that she chose to send the letter at all, having had time to reflect on what she had written. She lived some distance from Auckland, and had no car, it is extremely improbable that she would have had access to a post office that night.

In the second letter, dated Tuesday 13 April, Langley followed up on some of the matters laid out the previous evening. She described how ill she had been during the
night, and how she had now organised to change her name by Deed Poll to Oscar Wilde.\textsuperscript{30} Before doing this, she consulted her physician, Dr Reg Dudding, her solicitor, Mr L. E. Mellsop (who had been in the Auckland Psychiatric Hospital at the same time as Langley\textsuperscript{31}), and the Chief Librarian, Mr Robert Duthie. These three men were important figures in her life. There is evidence in subsequent letters of a long-standing romantic relationship between Mellsop and Langley (see Chapter 8). Reg Dudding she described as 'a lovable, willing doctor...we all loved him so',\textsuperscript{32} she had known him from the days before her incarceration. Robert Duthie she held in very high regard, and the feeling would appear to have been mutual (although in a recent letter, he said his memories of her were 'hazy'\textsuperscript{33}). He offered her substantial support in his role as chief executive at the Auckland Public Library. All three professional men were, apparently, willing to see her at short notice. Langley also consulted the Bank of Australasia,\textsuperscript{34} and provided the documentary evidence for a Deed Poll to be drawn up.\textsuperscript{35}

Langley requested of McDonald that the name change not 'interfere with your judgement about the coming book ...having gained my point I am more than satisfied'. She appealed for calm, offering to keep the name Eve Langley for literary purposes, adding 'with a rather ironic laugh, Eve Langley is not my name either' (she was christened Ethel Jane\textsuperscript{36}). Her advice to McDonald was not to worry about the name change for the purposes of publicity for 'White Topee', in fact, not really to worry about it at all, except when a rejection slip was on the way. An addendum to this letter was added the following day, which confirmed that the Deed Poll 'had been made out today, and signed and sealed'. The idea was that all rejection letters would be addressed to Oscar Wilde, thus relieving 'Eve Langley' of the burden of having to deal with the misery this inspired in her.

In the third letter (from which salutation and date are missing, but written before the 26 April), Langley returned the proofs sent to her by Angus & Robertson, but as she had no light to read them by it is unclear whether she actually did so. 'I have corrected [the proofs] hastily, but have no light on.'\textsuperscript{37} She argued in defence of 'Wild Australia', addressing the specific concerns raised by McDonald. She was proud of her ability to seize on an idea —however wild — and embroider it with cross-cultural and historical nuance. She argued that the Oscar Wilde material was a fantastic and innovatory plot development: 'There's no living writer since the beginning of literature who has ever thought out such a plot, such a story and been able to carry it out with vivacity.'\textsuperscript{38} She could not understand why it was described as 'dubious' when included in \textit{White Topee}, and 'altogether too strange' in 'Wild Australia', and

\textsuperscript{30} MSS 275. Tuesday April 1954.
\textsuperscript{31} Thwaite, Joy. op. cit. p. 415.
\textsuperscript{32} MSS 575. 8 July 1965.
\textsuperscript{33} Duthie, Robert. Letter to author. 23 November 1999.
\textsuperscript{34} MSS 301. 10 May 1954.
\textsuperscript{35} A phone call to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages in Auckland confirms that the process of changing one's name is straightforward, and dependent on the presentation of a birth certificate.
\textsuperscript{36} Thwaite. op. cit. p. 5.
\textsuperscript{37} MSS 281. n.d.
\textsuperscript{38} MSS 285. n.d.
was outraged that her creativity should be censured. This letter, apparently torn up when read, suggests that the normally calm and gentle McDonald may have felt pushed too far. The letter was obviously retrieved from wherever it landed, and placed carelessly in the file, but not in a correct sequence, and has not previously been put back together in the proper way. By carefully following through the flow of the ideas and language used, it is now possible to use the parts of this letter in their original order, and in the context of the previous missives sent to McDonald.

[MSS 281] I am returning the proofs of WHITE TOPEES with this letter. I have corrected them hastily, but have no light on. Getting it on the 26th of this month. Those who read the Oscar Wilde passages in the WHITE TOPEES couldn’t understand how you could refer to them as dubious. Of course, up at the LIBRARY, they know me and work with me all day and they are so used to me and my ways that they just don’t think anything of such a passage, such a story. They’ve heard it all before from me, because I often retail it and the James Whistler stories over the, [fragment] morning tea cups in the staff-room, and they are so used to it all, that they can’t understand how you can bother picking it out as dubious. Its only part of my life to them. And punish me anyway you like, but do, for God’s sake bring out WHITE TOPEES, and leave in the Oscar Wilde part, because, its different. Why other writers can write what they like, and why I CAN’T, I don’t know. Like the Library staff I’m dashed if I can see anything strange or dubious about that Oscar Wilde passage. The entire book though beautiful, is not to my mind anything to make people yell out with horror or outrage. I don’t think anyone would take the trouble to even criticise it adversely. And the same may be said of WILD AUSTRALIA. Its such a harmless book.

[MSS 285] Yes; Wild Australia is an utterly harmless book. And when you complain to me that it has no plot or story in it, I could reply that any intelligent and understanding reader would say, “My God, and its supposed to be Oscar Wilde still alive and wandering over the face of Australia as a pea picker and hop picker! For God’s sake isn’t that story enough...plot enough for anyone? Why, there’s no living writer since the beginning of literature who has ever thought out such a plot, such a story and been able to carry it out with vivacity! That’s what the Library staff say, anyhow. Ah. No I’m as worldly wise as yourself. If I had been the offspring of a [fragment] titled and wealthy man, another Banker Bartholdy’s son...ah, what a harvest of recognition I should now be reaping! But if Eve Langley the “daughter” of an Australian couple writes such a book, you, who are really kind, have to be careful. So, this day Eve Died. I slew her; not with a sword, nor with a kiss...but with a sheet of paper...A DEED POLL. Far back in my mind I hear a sad voice crying down in the East End in 1868. “POLL! 0, my Polly, aint it dreadful to think that we’ve got nothing to eat, “before the poor maternal scrap of humanity went out to get shirts to sew and finding them not, cast her starved body into the Thames. The Deed Poll. The Deep Polle. “0, my Polly, aint it dreadful to think that we’ve got nothing to eat.” And with the Deed Polle, today I slew Eve Langley before she could slay me. And as for Steve’s flights of fancy...Ah, well, I was STEVE once, poor brute, she loved Australia. But died in me when I came over here, Anyhow, don’t you punish me by refusing to turn out White Topees, and if I’ve said anything that’s hurt you, please forgive me, and I, myself apologise down to the very earth. Cara, perdonami!

Oscar Wilde.

[MSS 287] NB. I gave my copy of Wild Australia and White Topees over to my red haired constable friend to read, recently. His name is Constable Jim McDonald. Another McDonald, like you. He read them through, gave them back, read your letter, and said, “Why, what’s she got against them? Whats wrong with the books? I think they’re great. Especially those dance hall scenes at the hops. The Wilson sisters from Happy Valley are luscious. Tell her from me, “Miss McDonald, you don’t know a good book when you read one, if you turn down Wild Australia.” And 50,000 policemen can’t be wrong. If a
common policeman can understand it I can’t understand how these fancy imaginary
readers of yours should be knocked to the ground by it.

Langley felt that the Readers at Angus & Robertson had misunderstood the intention
of the Oscar Wilde passages in ‘Wild Australia’: ‘It seems to be the mixture of the
two people that makes you hesitate; but it was such a frightfully dead and dull year in
the story and so ignoble in a fashion that I had to drag in the past’. If the line ‘My
God, and it’s supposed to be Oscar Wilde still alive and wandering over the face of
Australia as a pea picker and hop picker!’ is read with the sarcasm that was
probably intended, then Langley’s sensitivity to the Oscar Wilde material may be read
in a different light. Langley had devised a ‘fantasy’ plot, which had been
misunderstood as ‘realism’. It raises the possibility that Langley ‘slew’ Eve because
that was the name that was linked with madness, the name that prevented her work
being appreciated as a creative effort, rather than the delusions of a lunatic. She was
not attempting to annihilate her ‘self’, but rather rid herself of a ‘tag’; ‘... I’m as
worldly wise as yourself. If I had been the offspring of a titled and
wealthy man, another Banker Bartholdy’s son...ah, what a harvest of recognition I
should now be reaping! But if Eve Langley the “daughter” of an Australian couple
writes such a book, you, who are really kind, have to be careful.’ She objected to the
fact that ‘other writers can write what they like’, while overlooking the hard fact that
writers can write exactly as they please, but there is no obligation for a publisher to
publish, nor a reader to read. Langley’s letters represented a veritable maelstrom of
emotion and rationale, injected with the intensity of a thwarted ego, contain misery,
anger, frustration, defiance, demand, and pathos. They are cloying, appealing,
disparaging, manipulative, pushy, bewildering, impenetrable in places, perfectly
coherent in others. All must have landed on McDonald’s desk within days of each
other, and Nan ‘sat’ on them for some time before replying.

On 10 May 1954, Langley sent Angus & Robertson a copy of the Deed Poll, to fulfil
her legal obligations. She wrote the same day to Shirley Tebbut, referring her to
some ‘studio portraits’ she had sent to McDonald, and enclosing an explanation of the
context of their composition. She then sent the pictures to McDonald (also on 10
May), asking her to pass them on to Shirley Tebbut, adding that she had just
finished her new book ‘Bancroft House’ and would send it over within the fortnight.
The imminent publication of White Topee was announced in the first issue of
Fragment, The House Magazine of Angus & Robertson & Halstead Press, in May

39 MSS 311. 24 May 1954.
40 MSS 281. n.d.
41 No MSS number
42 MSS 285. n.d.
43 MSS 299. Solicitor’s Document Regarding Eve Langley’s change of name to Oscar Wilde by Deed
Poll; ‘Dear Miss McDonald, Herewith enclosed the Deed Poll and a single copy. Would you please
look over both and keep the Copy for filing purposes? I should like you to return the original Deed as
soon as you can, because I have to take it down to the Electoral Office in High Street, to have my name
entered on the Electoral Rolls before the General Election comes along. The Deed Poll has also to go
down to the Bank of Australasia. The Bank was consulted beforehand and agreed, but wish you to see
the Deed before alteration of the Account. I am, truly yours, Oscar Wilde’ MSS 301. 10 May 1954.
44 MSS 303. 10 May 1954.
45 MSS 305. 10 May 1954.
1954.\textsuperscript{46} The reviewer found it ‘difficult to define the quality of \textit{White Topee}’ except in relation to the ‘brilliance and originality’ of \textit{The Pea Pickers}. ‘Eve Langley sees and interprets Australia as no other writer has done. She glories in the absurd and fantastic, and the mood changes with bewildering swiftness from romantic sorrow to uproarious laughter.’\textsuperscript{47}

When McDonald did finally reply to Langley’s letters about ‘Wild Australia’, on 17 May, it was a cool response. She addressed Langley’s concerns in a very restrained and precise manner, answering the author’s criticisms head on, going, as usual, right to the heart of the matter. Her concluding remarks, however, had her characteristically conciliatory edge to them.\textsuperscript{48} McDonald entreated Langley not to interpret this rejection as ‘a greater calamity than it really is’: ‘Wild Australia’ was simply not as good as \textit{The Pea Pickers} and \textit{White Topee}. She argued that publishing was a commercial enterprise, and decisions were made which reflected this. McDonald said that it was possible they were making a mistake about the book (‘It would not be the first time we were wrong’), and encouraged her to include the material in another book, or revise it.\textsuperscript{49} She also reminded Langley of an editor’s relatively humble status: ‘You credit me with being a much more influential person than I am when you imply that I can decide what is or is not to be published. My opinion is only one of several that are considered by the Publishing Committee before the final decision is made. And, of course, besides opinions on the literary quality of a manuscript, problems of production and finance have to be considered.’\textsuperscript{50}

Langley wrote back on 24 May, obviously placated by the conciliatory tone of McDonald’s letter. ‘I got your letter and was glad to read it’.\textsuperscript{51} She was posting the first draft of ‘Bancroft House’: ‘I thought I’d send it over to you, the first draft without all the long wait and work of typing it out and then finding you didn’t like…if the whole satisfies you, you could take it, and then advise me regarding the minor faults and I could work them out.’\textsuperscript{52} She could not resist some sarcasm: ‘Hope it is not too plotless or threadless; just there wasn’t any plot of thread at all in \textit{The Pea Pickers} or \textit{White Topee}…very little plot in the life of a pea picker.’\textsuperscript{53} but acknowledged that it was quite unlike ‘Wild Australia’. She inquired after the progress of \textit{White Topee}, and was deeply appreciative of the look of the proofs that had been sent; they reminded her of the way \textit{The Pea Pickers} had looked. ‘I don’t know how you achieve this magic, but it is your secret and I don’t suppose you will let a FRAGMENT of it escape’.\textsuperscript{54} She implored McDonald not to make her wait eight

\textsuperscript{46} Along with Nan McDonald’s \textit{The Lonely Fire}: ‘This most individual of poets transmits to the reader with great clarity and purity of image the essence of the Australian landscape, constant through all those changes of time and season which provide the variations to her theme.’ ‘Books in Production at Halstead.’ in \textit{Fragment}. No. 1. op. cit. p. 11.
\textsuperscript{47} ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} MSS 307. 17 May 1954.
\textsuperscript{49} Langley did subsequently revise the material, and submitted two more versions of ‘Wild Australia’ to Angus & Robertson. Thwaite. op. cit. notes that the two latter manuscripts were virtually identical, and excluded the Oscar Wilde emphasis of the first draft. All three versions were rejected. p. 82.
\textsuperscript{50} MSS 307. 17 May 1954.
\textsuperscript{51} MSS 311. 24 May 954.
\textsuperscript{52} ibid.
\textsuperscript{53} ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} ibid.
months for the verdict on 'Bancroft House': 'There is nothing in the book to require a tribunal this time. It is just a simple pastoral. You should be able to let me know within a few weeks, as Miss Beatrice Davis did with White Topee.' Langley also requested that McDonald hold on to 'Wild Australia' for her.

Her letter, however, arrived too late; McDonald had already despatched the manuscript of 'Wild Australia' back to Langley, but invited her to return it to Angus & Robertson.55 On 28 May McDonald had sent a polite letter returning the copy of the Deed Poll that Langley had sent. While acknowledging the author's request to be addressed as Oscar Wilde for any future rejections, McDonald advised Langley that she would continue to address her 'as Eve Langley because you have decided to retain it for your books...and we usually deal with authors under the name used in this way'.56 At the end of June, the first copies of White Topee were released, and one was airfreighted to Langley immediately.57 McDonald acknowledged the arrival of the 'Bancroft House' manuscript,58 and emphasised that 'White Topee...is a book that will live'.59

On 1 August 1954, Langley began a letter to McDonald that carried over into the next week. It included a list of all the prominent people in Langley's life, and in Auckland generally, as well as in the Australian press, who had expressed interest in and enthusiasm for White Topee. Mr Duthie, the City Librarian wrote to her saying 'It is exciting to know the writer personally and we all look forward with interest and delight to reading White Topee.'60 People from the Auckland Press, and the University were in touch, wanting to get a copy of the book, as were other writers and reviewers, although there was frustration at the absence of copies for sale and distribution. Langley was passing around her six author's copies for people to read.61

Whitecombe and Tombs, an important publishing and retail concern in New Zealand had the book displayed beautifully,62 as did the Library. Langley quoted at length the various people who had commented positively on the book. Mr Bond, 'a publisher who is working with me in the gallery...said the book was startlingly lovely, and that he felt that a really great and mysterious story lay behind the Oscar Wilde portion, but that he would not ask'. Langley reported that she was ‘busy at work’ on her new book ‘The Nimrod Type’, and added a deeply appreciative note for the effort that had gone into White Topee. 'The book...is exquisitely done, from beginning to end; many,

55 MSS 317. 29 June 1954.
56 MSS 313. 28 May 1954.
57 MSS 317. 29 June 1954.
58 MSS 315. n.d. ‘Manuscript submitted 21.6.54 Bancroft House. Decision postponed – see correspondence. Returned to author (re Post) 8.10.54. See correspondence.’
59 MSS 317. 29 June 1954.
60 MSS 321. 1 August 1954.
61 MSS 321. 1 August 1954/ 8 August 1954.
62 See also MSS 333. 11 October 1954. 'Whitcombe and Tombs are featuring WHITE TOPEE in an original way in their window, and have it in the shop...beautifully surrounded by very Eastern and charming Chines "WINDSONGS"; those utterly exquisite chunks of slender glass that sing and sung mystically all throughout a hot day in the East. And this shows, at least; that someone in Whitcombe and Tombs has a strangely lovely imagination and...oddest of all...really understands me and my writing even as you do.'
many thanks.' It was a sentiment echoed in her next letter on 14 September: 'Many thanks for the way you brought it out and particularly for the beautiful cover design which has been admired by many.' Langley had not heard anything about 'Bancroft House', and urged McDonald to write to her.

Angus & Robertson were non-committal about the likely publication of 'Bancroft House'. Although the book was not rejected outright, 'the firm's official opinion is that it is too soon after White Topee to make a decision about your next book. We never think it a good idea to have two books by the same author following too closely and, of course, the sales of a previous book must be taken into consideration'. McDonald requested a more appropriate copy of the manuscript: 'the present one, being designed to save space, is rather difficult to read'. Her advice was to provide 'a double spaced copy on white paper and one side of the page'. Characteristically, McDonald concluded with an encouraging observation: 'I think 'Bancroft House' is a wonderful place. I have been trying to think of other houses in literature, but cannot recollect any with such a rich personality.'

As Langley did not have a copy of 'Bancroft House', the firm returned the manuscript by registered post on 8 October 1954. Langley was extremely busy, working on 'The Nimrod Type', which was to be followed by her next book 'The Hall Caine'. She had to keep writing, she said, because the New Zealand Literary Fund required a list of twenty books 'before they would give me the literary grant of £300'. She had received the money by early the following year. McDonald was rather perplexed by this expectation, and wrote on 10 December expressing her surprise: 'Surely they can't expect you to write twenty novels one after the other! That would be a lifetime's output, or more, for most writers – serious writers, I mean, not the ones who churn out a couple of written-to-formula romances every six months.' McDonald wondered if she was not just taking Langley's remarks 'too literally'. Langley added to the conundrum by writing early the following year that this was indeed the case, but it was twenty in addition to the six already mentioned!

As this roller coaster year drew to a close, Langley's position with Angus & Robertson would seem to have changed, albeit subtly. Langley was very pleased with the response to her new book; the publisher was more circumspect. The term 'baffling' was applied several times by McDonald to Langley's writing, and a question mark hung over her ability to produce publishable work in the future. Certainly it was felt that The Pea Pickers had achieved a status that was not likely to be bettered by Langley. Publishing more of her work was always going to be a compromise. (White Topee 'has many of the virtues of The Pea Pickers...but somehow there is less of them...no amount of editing will be able to make it as good

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63 ibid.
64 MSS 325. 20 September 1954.
65 MSS 333. 11 October 1954.
66 MSS 315. n.d. 'Bancroft House' 'Returned to author by post 8.10.54.'
67 MSS 333. 11 October 1954.
68 In February 1955, Langley received a letter from Pat Lawlor, Secretary of the Fund, acknowledging her thanks for the money. He did not specify the amount or the conditions attached to the award. See also MSS 353. 19 May 1955.
69 MSS 335. 10 December 1954.
as *The Pea Pickers*, Wild Australia’ was ‘...an inferior third to *The Pea Pickers* and *White Topee*.’ "Bancroft House’ did seem to be a possibility, but its publication did not eventuate.

By the end of 1954, Langley’s amicable relationship with McDonald, while compromised over the furore associated with ‘Wild Australia’, appeared on the surface to have been restored. There were curious parallels with 1942: great success associated with profound emotional upheaval, and both years had significant consequences. While 1942 marked the beginning of seven years incarceration, 1954 was the year of her last published book. It was recognised by her editors that with careful and time-consuming editing, Langley’s work had great potential: Davis had achieved the right balance with *The Pea Pickers*; McDonald had expended great effort to do the same with *White Topee*. But circumstances in the publishing world were changing, and that kind of time and effort were no longer considered a worthwhile investment when it came to Eve Langley.\(^\text{72}\)


\(^{71}\) MSS 135. 30 September 1953. Reader’s Report on ‘Wild Australia’. ‘Wild Australia’ was ‘a mere nostalgic echo of the rich humour and adventure of *The Pea Pickers*.’

\(^{72}\) For example, Rosemary Bolton’s (Dobson) Reader’s Report of ‘Wild Australia’: ‘Revised and edited (a long and arduous task for the most sympathetic and understanding editor) it might take its place as the third volume of a trilogy.’ Nan McDonald added ‘I doubt whether even the most drastic editing could make this into a satisfactory book, and certainly no one could spare the time to try it at present.’ MSS 137. 30 September 1953.
Chapter Five

1955

In the course of her correspondence with Nan McDonald during 1955 (she had not heard at all from Beatrice Davis since early 1953), Langley referred to numerous manuscripts she had completed or was working on, and other planned sequels that were on the drawing board. During the year, Langley was writing four different books: ‘Ship Me Somewhere East of Suez’ (submitted to Angus & Robertson on 12 May 1955, and rejected on 29 July); ‘The Nimrod Type’ (completed in August, but not forwarded to the publisher); and two other books she started in August called ‘The Australian’, and ‘The Crossover Hotel’. She wrote them as sequels, and all were of a particular length: 400 pages, with 50 pages to each chapter, and typed on thin sheets of paper known as ‘onion skin’.

In March, Langley lost her job at the Auckland Public Library where she had worked since 1950. While she put a positive spin on this development, saying it allowed her more time for writing, the down-side was the loss of a network of friendship and professional interaction with people who loved books, and seemed to love her work. The Library was characterised by its ‘excellent staff relations’ and had the reputation of being ‘a happy place in which to work’. The staff, according to Langley, was very supportive of her endeavours, and offered her great encouragement. They also provided her with a ready-made and appreciative audience, and it is perhaps not surprising that her novels became increasingly introspective as she became more isolated, and less mindful of who she was writing for.

The release of White Topee created some interest in the press, and Langley appreciated the attention. The actual content of the reviews seemed immaterial to Langley, who was genuinely grateful that the book had stimulated interest. She was also voluble in her praise for the effort that had gone into its production. ‘If you see Mr Quentin Davis, the artist who designed the dust jacket with the marvellous white topee and the red purple free... will you please thank him a thousand Eastern times for

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1 This manuscript is not listed in the Angus & Robertson/Eve Langley file at the Mitchell Library.
2 *Angus & Robertson: correspondence and Readers' Reports: Langley, Eve* Mitchell Library: Sydney. ML. MSS 3269/47. MSS 69-631. MSS 351. 12 May 1955. All future references to the Langley documents that are contained under this file will be referred to using the MSS number within the file and the date.
3 MSS 361. 29 July 1955.
4 MSS 365. 22 August 1955.
5 ibid.
6 ibid.
me?...And many thanks again to you for your love of the book and the production of it.\(^9\) Langley continued to lobby for a reprint of *The Pea Pickers* and publication of ‘Bancroft House’ on the strength of *White Topees*, and wrote regularly to McDonald – eight letters in all for 1955. McDonald wrote back three times, in January, July and November; by then she seemed somewhat exhausted by the effort of keeping up with all Langley’s projects. ‘You write your novels with such bewildering rapidity that I am never sure which one you are working on at the moment, but whatever it is I send my best wishes for it, and for yourself.’\(^10\)

Langley, by way of contrast, projected an unruffled demeanour. Her constant references to multiple books created an impression of extraordinary industry, but it seems she was working fairly methodically through each one at a time. And although the completion of two books in one year would indeed be a triumph of effort for many writers, there was a great deal of repetition in what she was writing, and the drafts she presented to McDonald were raw in the extreme. She claimed that she was not ‘tied’ to her writing; she merely wrote ‘at night and during the weekend, just in between being in the sea and puttying the launch or painting it’. At the beginning of the year she was still working at the Public Library, and got a lift with neighbours into Auckland each morning.\(^11\)

The correspondence in 1955 began with Langley describing a very relaxed Christmas break ‘spent down in the mangrove creek or sitting inside the cool launch, drinking orange drinks and smoking cigarettes’.\(^12\) McDonald’s second book of poetry *The Lonely Fire*\(^13\) had recently been released, and Langley had ‘glimpsed’ a copy, the contents of which ‘still sparkles dustily on the hearth of my soul’. She was working on two books: ‘The Nimrod Type’ and ‘another good book’ called ‘Ship Me Somewhere East of Suez’. Having re-read ‘Bancroft House’ (McDonald had returned the only copy to her), she was very satisfied with what she had achieved, although she put off retyping it until she had confirmation of the likelihood of its publication. ‘I like it just as well as the fortnight in which I wrote it. It is a jewel-like book, embalming the past carefully.’\(^14\)

In January, McDonald forwarded several reviews of *White Topee* to Langley, with the caution that she did not think that all of them truly appreciated the ‘quality of the book’.\(^15\) She observed that they were ‘good on the whole’, but that in some there were ‘silly comments’. But Langley was delighted with them all: ‘I love all the press cuttings, you know, and think they are just what they should be, marvellously superior

\(^10\) MSS 367. 21 November 1955.
\(^11\) ‘I work at the Public Library, you know, every day, and go in every morning with a great couple people. [sic] He is an artist not long up from Tahiti, where he used to live and paint on a coral atoll. His wife is a lovely Tahitian.’ MSS 337. 7 January 1955.
\(^12\) MSS 337. 7 January 1955.
\(^13\) Comment regarding Nan McDonald’s *The Lonely Fire*: ‘This most individual of poets transmits to the reader with great clarity and purity of image the essence of the Australian landscape, constant through all those changes of time and season with provide the variations to her theme.’ *Books in Production at Halstead.* Fragment. No 1, May 1954. p 11.
\(^14\) MSS 337. 7 January 1955.
\(^15\) MSS 343. 25 January 1955.
and richly thoughtful decorations about an entirely decorative book'. She continued to be very encouraged by all the positive feedback from the staff and patrons of the Library.  

16 The Library staff were very busy at work putting together the Literary Section of the Auckland Festival of Arts, and four of Langley's books and manuscripts were to be on display. 17 This was no small thing, for space at the exhibition Writing in Auckland was at a premium, and there were many that missed out. 18 Robert Duthie, the City Librarian since 1953, later wrote to Langley, saying that both 'Wild Australia' and White Topee 'aroused a lot of interest at the Festival'.

Although the Library was quite obviously a source of great fellowship, Langley professed relief when her employment was terminated on the 23 March when the book-bindery was unexpectedly outsourced to a city firm. 20 There was considerable concern at an administrative level in the Library at the time about the condition of the physical structure of the buildings, and the inadequacy of its storage and work spaces.

'There is not sufficient room,' Duthie reported early in 1953 'to maintain present services with any degree of efficiency, apart altogether from the question of extending the library’s activities. Nothing short of a major structural alteration or a new building will have more than a mere palliative effect.'

Langley was offered work elsewhere in the Library, but declined, saying she was glad of the opportunity to rest for a while 'in comparative peace...because I have my own home, you know, and its lovely out in the ranges in autumn.' 22 The significance of Langley’s change in circumstances should not be underestimated. Both Wynne Colgan and Robert Duthie, the most senior members of staff, had offered her considerable support in her writing. Her retrenchment is bound to have caused a profound alteration to habits and routines that had provided an effective scaffold as she re-entered life outside the Mental Hospital. It must also have caused some financial hardship, but she was intent on presenting it to McDonald in a positive light. Despite offers, she did not return to employment in the Library again. 'The sun and the earth, they’re life to me, and I can’t stay long all day under a roof.'

16 'The Librarian from the Remuera Branch, (Auckland's fashionable suburb) came in the other day and told me that WHITE TOPEE was enormously popular out there. It is only in five minutes, she said, and it is gone again.' MSS 347. 14 March 1955.

17 'There is to be a Literary Section, and Mr Colgan, the Deputy Chief, has taken four of my books on, for exhibition. My copy of NOT YET THE MOON, as Duttons brought out The Peapickers. A copy of White Topee. One of the MSS of Wild Australia, and the MSS of White Topee, too. He has read them all and likes the MSS of both.' MSS 347. 14 March 1955.

18 Colgan, Wynne. op. cit. p. 147.

19 MSS 359. 23 July 1955.

20 Thwaite, Joy. The Importance of Being Eve Langley. Angus & Robertson: Australia. 1989. p. 429. says it is not clear whether she was fired, or she left of her own accord, but notes that she left on the 23 March 1955, which is the precise date of the Langley letter. Although the history of the Auckland Public Library does not specify that the bindery section was outsourced at that time, it does say that the section was 'urgently in need of increased working areas in the mid-1950s.' Colgan, Wynne. op. cit. p. 141.

21 Colgan, Wynne. op. cit. p. 136.

22 MSS 345. 23 March 1955.

23 'Mr Duthie said that later on if I like, he would give me work on one of the desks down in the Reference Dept, or I could help with the cataloguing.' MSS 251. 12 May 1955.
Langley has stated that the Public Trustee relinquished her affairs in 1954, but Angus & Robertson sent the royalties for *White Topee* to the Trustee who forwarded them on. The book had sold in excess of 3,000 copies (out of a print run of 5,000), and Langley was hopeful that Angus & Robertson might be encouraged by these figures to reprint *The Pea Pickers* and publish *Bancroft House*.

Langley submitted ‘Ship Me Somewhere East of Suez’ (‘a fast moving adventure story of experiences in the Boxer Rebellion of 1899 – 1901’) in May. She noted that this was the original manuscript ‘just as it was written, without preamble, or previous attempts’, and was ‘of course yours to do what you like with, in the way of cutting and pruning and shaping and moulding, just as you did with *White Topee*.’ She was moving ahead with ‘The Nimrod Type’ ‘and after that comes “The Crossover Hotel”…a purely and simply Australian book’. There was no immediate response from McDonald regarding ‘Ship Me Somewhere East of Suez’, and Langley wrote again: ‘Have you read it yet and could you give me your opinion of it?’

There was just one Reader’s Report on ‘Suez’; and Nan McDonald read the manuscript herself. The verdict was similar to previous reports on other manuscripts: ‘patches of …characteristically brilliant writing…many things one would like to salvage, but as a whole it is unpublishable.’ She wrote to Langley that although she had read ‘Suez’ with ‘great enjoyment’, ‘Bancroft House’ should ‘still be the first to be considered for publication…’East of Suez’ is in your more fantastic vein, and we find that most readers have only a limited appetite for the fantastic’. Regarding ‘Bancroft House’, however, McDonald was adamant that she would not ask anyone else to read and review the manuscript until Langley had submitted a more appropriate copy. ‘I suppose you think we make a fuss about our eyes, but with all the MSS that must be read eyestrain is practically an occupational disease for publishers, and that single spacing on pink paper is really so trying that only your most devoted admirers (such as myself) would persevere in reading it.’

Langley had no option but to oblige, and had provided a ‘new and handsome copy’ by November, but its copying came at the expense of work on her seventh book ‘The Crossover Hotel’. She had finished ‘The Nimrod Type’, but was inclined not to bother McDonald with it ‘unless you are interested in reading the manuscript’.

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24 MSS 345. 23 March 1955.
25 ‘I am enclosing the receipt for the royalties received yesterday, through the Public Trust. Thank you very much indeed for them. I am glad the book returned A&R so much, really, and that you've only a few copies remaining, 1938 out of 5000 or so. I think that’s quite good, don’t you? I do hope you can publish Bancroft House, since White Topees’ sale has been so good.’ MSS 345. 23 March 1955.
26 MSS 349. 12 May 1955.
27 MSS 251. 12 May 1955.
28 ibid.
29 MSS 359. 23 July 1955.
31 ibid.
32 MSS 361. 29 July 1955.
33 MSS 367. 21 November 1955.
34 MSS 365. 22 August 1955.
35 ibid.
sequel to 'The Nimrod Type' was to be 'The Australian', yet another book that she had started. She responded graciously to McDonald's comments on 'Ship Me Somewhere East of Suez': 'Many thanks indeed for the nice appreciation of SUEZ. I am glad you enjoyed it.'

McDonald, meanwhile, arranged for Rosemary Dobson to read 'Bancroft House' and promised to keep Langley informed of progress. Dobson provided her Report in November, and it was very positive. She thought 'Bancroft House' better than *White Topees* in many ways, and recommended its publication. The chief difficulty lay in the kind of editing that the manuscript required. 'I don't feel that I can recommend that any lengthy single passages be cut from the book. The cuts I suggest would be much more complicated and time-consuming...'. It was the issue of time and effort that determined when — and if — 'Bancroft House' would be published.

Langley's habit of submitting novels without revision was largely self-defeating. It may have saved her time and effort in the short term, but, as has been argued, 'No novel is written till it is revised...it is one of the processes of art'. Langley essentially lacked the motivation and discipline to organise her writing, and critically assess the merits of her material. In this regard, she displayed a naïve and egotistical attitude to her work and her editors: she assumed that the true merit of her writing was evident, and its revision mere detail. McDonald wanted to find another Langley book for the Angus & Robertson stable, but felt very strongly that Langley should take more responsibility for the presentation of her manuscripts. Had Langley done so, things might have turned out very differently.

36 ibid.
37 MSS 369. 24 November 1955.
Chapter Six

1956-1958

In 1956, for the first time, Eve Langley met her editors Nan McDonald and Beatrice Davis whom she knew only through correspondence, when she travelled the East Coast of Australia for approximately 10 months. She had not left New Zealand for nearly 25 years, and her trip was a great success in terms of her own professional development. It did more than just revive a professional association; it enabled Langley to establish a personal basis for her relationship with Beatrice Davis. The meeting allowed Davis and McDonald the opportunity to communicate their expectations as editors, and for Langley to re-establish a basis of trust in her professional relationship. Langley took with her two manuscripts — ‘The Nimrod Type’ and ‘The Australian’ — that Nan McDonald read and discussed with her. Interestingly, Langley continued to write exclusively to McDonald following the initial visit to Sydney, but to Davis on her return to New Zealand. In this chapter, her journeys and activities are reconstructed from letters to Blue and McDonald and Davis, and a reply from the author Hal Porter, which places her meeting with him in 1956, not 1954 as previously thought. In 1958, *The Pea Pickers* was reprinted, having been out of print for some 16 years.

Between August 1955 and August 1956, Langley did not send any letters to her editors at Angus & Robertson. There is no indication in the correspondence file that she was planning a trip to Australia, and the first mention of it appears in a letter to June in November 1957, written aboard the *Orion* en route to Sydney. Her letters to Angus & Robertson in August 1956 and September 1956 were to inquire about the progress of ‘Bancroft House’. There was no mention of the other manuscripts she had planned, or was working on the previous year. Although McDonald had promised to keep Langley informed about ‘Bancroft House’ there was obviously no progress at all to report.

Things were extremely busy at Angus & Robertson. The production of the ten-volume set of *The Australian Encyclopaedia* was coming to a close. Although Walter Cousins had signed the original contract on 3 May 1948, it was not until June 1958

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1 As Langley had not made copies of them, she took them back with her, but had still not made copies at 19 October 1959. *Angus & Robertson: correspondence and Readers’ Reports: Langley, Eve.* Mitchell Library. ML MSS 3269/47. MSS 69-631. MSS 441. 19 October 1959. All future references to the Langley documents that are contained under this file will be referred to using the MSS number within the file and the date.

2 ‘Just a very hurried note to ask you how Bancroft House is going.’ MSS 373. 8 August 1956.


that it was released throughout Australia.\(^5\) To give some indication of the size of the undertaking, the index alone took more than 350 pages, contained 40,000 entries and approximately 75,000 references.\(^6\) In addition, of course, it was necessary to keep the Encyclopaedia up to date even as it was being produced. Alec Chisholm, formerly editor of The Argus, Melbourne, supervised its production, and although McDonald and Davis do not seem to have been directly involved, they ‘had lost’ several of the editorial staff in 1953 who were not replaced for ‘at least three years’.\(^7\) Rosemary Bolton had also left in 1953 to ‘start a family’ (she had married Alec Bolton in 1951). Davis ‘eventually got three more staff: Elizabeth Wood Ellem, Marilyn Stacy and Eric Russell’.\(^8\) But everyone was under a lot of pressure, and it was perhaps unfortunate that ‘Bancroft House’ arrived just at this time, for it was a book with serious potential as the next Langley release.

Langley wrote to Beatrice Davis for the first time in five years, on 23 September 1956\(^9\) and on the same day, sent a letter to McDonald.\(^10\) She told each that she had written to the other, because the long break in communication had made her wonder whether McDonald wasn’t ‘abroad on holiday’.\(^11\) To McDonald, Langley wrote: ‘I am anxious to know what has become of it [Bancroft House] and what is to be its fate, so am writing again to ask you to write to me as soon as possible and let me know how it stands with the readers of the firm and yourself.’ To Beatrice she wrote: ‘I am writing to you to let me know the fate of the book and what is to be done with it’. Neither replied.

Perhaps spurred to action by this inactivity on the part of her publisher, Langley took herself off to Sydney. She wrote to June that she was intending to visit Metung and Crossover,\(^12\) and in another letter to her sister, on 14 November 1956 she was staying with Beatrice Davis’s cousin in Snails Bay in Sydney. ‘Dear Blue, am staying with Countess de Wilme – Hautemaunt, but A&R will do for an address. Angus & Robertson insisted on taxi-ing me out to her, she is Beatrice’s cousin, and I am sitting in my bedroom belonging to Mrs Lister, Lister Lister’s sister, the great Australian artist of the ‘80s.’\(^13\)

Over the next ten months, Langley travelled widely: by December she was in Brisbane, Queensland;\(^14\) in January 1957 Cairns;\(^15\) February, Panlooks, Victoria;\(^16\)

\(^6\) ibid. p. 4.
\(^7\) Davis, Beatrice. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. 19 May 1977. TRC 527 ANL.
\(^9\) MSS 375. 23 September 1956.
\(^10\) MSS 377. 23 November 1956.
\(^11\) MSS 375. 23 November 1956.
\(^14\) MSS 379. 7 December 1956.

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April in Devonport, Tasmania; May, back in Gippsland; July in Sydney and Manildra, and in August 1957 she was back again in Laingholm, New Zealand.

Beatrice Davis recalled their first encounter many years later: ‘At first she was very strange...Langley was wearing a massive dark fur coat to her ankles that she wore in summer with an athletic singlet and shorts, and in winter with a man’s suit’. Langley herself confirmed this in her letter to June: ‘am wearing male clothes, a good suit and topee, or white shorts, shirt and same and sandals.’ Davis said that she ‘wasn’t expecting anything but a very talented person, I didn’t …visualise Eve at all except that she was rather beautiful, although she gave a very good description of herself in the beginning of *The Pea Pickers*.’ Langley was obviously not too ‘strange’, however, because Davis arranged for her to stay with her cousin in Snail’s Bay. In her letter to June of November 11, Langley praised the assistance provided her by the staff at Angus & Robertson: ‘the girls at A & R were so good to me’. Eric Russell (another Angus & Robertson editor) had mapped out the streets for her. She travelled to the Blue Mountains, the Jenolan Caves, to the Hawkesbury and Parramatta. She saw Douglas Stewart at the *Bulletin*, and hoped to see Norman Lindsay.

In early December 1956, Langley was in Brisbane, Queensland, planning either to go far north, or return to Sydney on the 2nd of January ‘precisely’. She visited the

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15 MSS 395. n.d. [January 1957]
16 MSS [no number]. 25 February 1957.
18 ‘Dear Steve, Now you are in the area where you spent the happiest days of your life....I think, because it was there you met the only love, the first love, which lives forever in the heart...everything is very real, and as you say is 'just the same', and that is what we wanderers love, a sameness as though we had never left...I think that security, rests there with a father...someone to whom all look for love, guidance, and stability, and a sense of HOME that can never exist without either...FATHER OR MOTHER...Grateful for your weekly letter...’ Langley, June. Letter to Eve Langley. 27 May 1957. Eve Langley Papers. Mitchell Library: Sydney. Correspondence 20 April 1954 - 8 November 1972. MSS 4188 (6) Item 2.
19 Department of Motor Transport Sydney NSW wrote to Langley at Laingholm Drive: ‘It is desired to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 26 August 1957 wherein is contained details of a bag lost by you on 1St July 1957 and to inform you that there is no trace of an article of this description having been handed into this office up to 10th Sept 1957...’ Department of Transport to Eve Langley. Eve Langley Papers. Mitchell Library: Sydney. Correspondence 20 April 1954 - 8 November 1972. MS 4188 (6) Item 2.
21 MSS 397. 26 August 1957.
24 Stewart, Douglas. and Beatrice Davis: ‘The Shadows are Different’. op. cit.
26 MSS 379. 7 December 1956.
27 Davis had a house at Sackville Reach, on the Hawkesbury River 'a dilapidated house on a few acres of river frontage'. Barker, Anthony. op. cit. p. 27. Langley may have visited her here.
Queensland Library, and had a ‘chat’ to the librarian about *The Pea Pickers* and *White Topee*, which she asked to see. The librarian advised Langley against going cane cutting: ‘Told her I should like to go cane cutting, but she wasn’t enthusiastic and spoke of young Italians with hard corned hands through use of the cane knife. So shan’t worry the growers, I think…’ Langley had accidentally left her copy of *White Topee* with Beatrice Davis, and she asked McDonald to organise its dispatch to Queensland. ‘And tell Beatrice how much I loved staying with Vinia and how very kind she was to me, also.’ Queensland inspired her greatly. She wandered, and collected nature’s trinkets: its flowers and its ‘bush stuff’, and, of course, wrote, luxuriating in the tropical lushness with her opulent style.

I’ve been to the beach and all else at Sandgate and have at last seen the Queensland seas in all their grey slow moving lugubrious splendour, and put an amazing creature in a tin, wrapped in a rag, and walked many a mile with him, and he colored the rag as purple as the toga of Nero, emperor of Rome, and we parted with mutual regret at eventide, he to his salty wind curled pool by the Queensland sea and I, to my bus past banana plantation and paw paw.  

The black crows made her long to stay in Australia, ‘so Australian that I don’t want to return to my moutons [sic] (NZ) but I must, I suppose’. McDonald wrote back promptly, having sent the requested copy of *White Topee* to the Brisbane office of the *Bulletin*, ‘as you requested, and also several letters that have come for you recently’.  

Five days later, on 17 December, Langley wrote again to McDonald, acknowledging receipt of the book and letters, and thanking her. She asked that McDonald redirect her mail to the Sydney *Bulletin* office, then changed her mind and asked her to keep it until she returned in January. Langley had visited a pineapple refinery, and paw paw, custard apple and pineapple plantations, and was contemplating a trip to Cairns ‘but its so hot, I don’t care if I go or not’. Langley then, separately, sent a Christmas card ‘To everyone at Angus & Robertson, from Eve Langley’.

Langley decided to travel on to Cairns, and in January 1957, wrote thanking McDonald for sending on her letters, and asking her to forward any other letters to Cairns, for she intended to stay until February, after which she expected to be back in Sydney. She was very enthusiastic about the flying foxes, and the landscape: ‘This is the sort of country to write in, and write good books, full of cane cutters, lots of wonderful types here’. She had been to the sugar mills, and the Great Barrier Reef, and begun two new books. One called ‘Flamboyang’, and the other ‘Flying Foxes’: ‘Notes on themes, red and black, night and day, and its so hot here, that I wonder what it is like in China…’ She found the effect of the monsoon ‘flowery, frantically flowery, I suppose you know it well’. She knew McDonald had been to Queensland, and ‘so I shant be bothering you with my descriptions of it’. But she noted how

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29 MSS 379. 7 December 1956.  
30 MSS 381. 12 December 1956.  
31 MSS 383. 17 December 1956.  
delightful the nights were, and the big hotels with their 'soft brilliant lights', and the 'same old houses all rattan and lattice and secret'.

She said she had had two poems about Queensland published in the _Bulletin_: 'I could write tones[sic] more, but for the HEAT. My back is sopping wet all day. I pour the monsoon back into the monsoon'. She concluded with a reminder about the mail, which was to be sent to one of a couple of addresses 'and I'll get it'. She had already organised Miss Oates of the _Bulletin_ in Brisbane 'who sends it up to Witticks News Agency and it gets me'.

On 22 January 1957, Langley wrote again to McDonald from Cairns, asking her to look for 'a page or two of old exercise book pages among the manuscript and book I brought over'. She thought in fact, that it was just the one page, 'if I remember rightly', which she felt was missing from her 'red Book of Poems started in Australia in 1922'. She had, she reported, been to Port Douglas, and the Barwon Falls.

McDonald wrote straight back, saying she had 'looked through all the manuscripts you left with us, and can't find any exercise-book pages amongst them. I don't remember seeing them at any time; perhaps they are tucked away in some of your other things.' McDonald noted she had 'read and enjoyed' a poem about Queensland that had been printed in the _Bulletin_, adding 'There must be some good material for poems lying about up there, but I'm sure I couldn't write in that climate. My mind works best in a frost.' It was the only time McDonald referred to her own profession as poet and writer. She ended her correspondence with Langley with a characteristically generous invitation: 'We are looking forward to hearing your impressions.' It was the only letter from McDonald to Langley in 1957, and is the last from McDonald on Langley's file.

Langley was at Panlooks in Victoria in late February 1957, and asking McDonald to now send her mail on to her there. Charlie Willoughby had died, but 'all the rest of the book's heroes and heroines are all well, but some are parents and grandparents, for I havent been here for 25 years, and the tiny trees that Arthur Bennet used to hoist things around are now 50 foot tall and about 6 foot around the trunk'. She was picking hops and noted that 'so many changes have taken place here.' In May, she was still in Gippsland, and met with Hal Porter, who has subsequently been interviewed extensively about this meeting. Beatrice Davis had written to him asking him to assist her, which he recalled he was glad to do. 'Beatrice Davis...wrote to me and said that Eve [would]...be coming through to Metung...to revisit the place...and she said if there's anything you can do, do it for her. I was delighted...one of the curious things about the area there is that the older generation still call people, behind their back, by the names Eve gave them...'. He was fascinated to meet her, and later, after Langley had written to him, sent her a letter which began: 'My dear Eve...it was

33 MSS 395. n.d. [January 1957].
34 MSS 389. 22 January 1957.
35 MSS 391. 30 January 1957.
36 MSS 393. 25 February 1957.

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wonderful to hear from you as it was wonderful to meet you.'38 He was working at the Library in Bairnsdale, 'and I heard she was staying in Metung with the Black Serpent.' [Porter telephoned her and they arranged to meet] 'But as I was getting ready to leave to meet her, she turned up at the house. “It is Eve, it is I” She had a light voice and patter of tiny footsteps. Eve was in a navy blue pinstriped suit and cardigan and striped tie. Small feet in schoolboy shoes. She had a long fur coat on – quite opulent, and a white toppee.' Langley took Porter to the places that had inspired. ‘Eve would pick up gum nuts, stones, shapes, fleece – she wanted bits to take back to remind her of Gippsland. Throughout the day, she would say, “Oh, Oscar wants that”.'39

Hal Porter became an oft-quoted source of information about Langley, despite the fact that he met her only twice. Her called her ‘indubitably a genius’, and created a seductive picture of a ‘princess falling asleep’, forever ‘bewitched and transfixed’ by the memory of her youth. He saw her as ‘trapped in the era and the area’; all she had ever written about was 1928, the ‘long hot summer’. She could be ‘vivacious, lucid and intelligent...at other times, she was away somewhere else. Oscar Wilde and latent lesbianism...”40

His description of Langley, though eloquent and evocative, added a layer of mysticism that serves in part his own agenda as a writer of fiction. Some of his ‘facts’ are simply incorrect, such as his assertion that ‘the first time I met her was when she came to Sydney for the launch of her second book [White Topee]’.41 Porter actually met Langley in 1957, when he spent a day with her revisiting the locale of The Pea Pickers. He devoted ten pages to this meeting in his autobiography The Extra.42 Porter ‘warned’ his reader in an earlier section of the ‘strange and avoidless game of setting the creator beside the creation’.43 ‘Writers should, perhaps, not meet other writers. You read something. Later, you meet the author. Whatever relationship follows...has elements a relationship with normal people can never have.’44 This is highlighted in his description of his meeting with Langley. He loved The Pea Pickers and ‘over the years’ [had] ‘heard the local legends about the unusual young woman, Steve...’45 Then Langley floated back onto the set of Mettung ‘the central setting of the two novels’ in 1956.46 Porter grew up in Gippsland, and knew the landscape and the characters of The Pea Pickers. His autobiographical writing has all the embroidery of his fiction, and he has woven Langley into it. By his own admission, ‘Writers can be caught in the webs they spin, like cuckoo spiders, from the silk of others’ lives.’47 He was speaking of Langley, but he could have also been speaking of himself.

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39 Stewart, Douglas and Beatrice Davis. ‘The Shadows are different.’ op. cit.
40 Porter, Hal. Interview with Meg Stewart. op. cit.
41 ibid.
43 ibid. p. 84.
44 ibid. p. 83.
45 ibid. p. 141.
46 ibid. p. 142.
47 ibid. p. 143.
All this is only really a problem when he is quoted as an authority on Langley, and he is quoted a great deal. Douglas Stewart’s daughter, Meg interviewed him and made a film about him talking about Langley. His stories need to be treated only as anecdote, and not as conclusive documentary evidence of the ‘real’ Eve Langley. It does not help Langley that his recreation of a meeting so long ago dovetails so neatly with Joy Thwaite’s arguments of a distorted personality.

At the end of August 1957, Langley was back in New Zealand ‘with the rain pouring down over the ferns’. She was missing Australia, but had started ‘a new book called ‘The Wanderer Returns’’. She was still unclear about what was happening with ‘Bancroft House’, but understood – probably from discussions in Sydney, that Beatrice Davis would take it ‘and I hope it will be alright’. A new intimacy in the relationship between Davis and Langley would appear to have developed as a result of the Sydney trip. Although Langley wrote just twice during 1958 (and then, not until August) and Davis only once, they addressed each other as ‘Beatrice’ and ‘Eve’ instead of ‘Beatrice Davis’ and ‘Eve Langley’. The usual ‘yours ever’, that Langley had previously concluded her letters with had been expanded to ‘yours ever with love’. Although Langley had also met Nan in Sydney, she seems not to have established the same level of intimacy, and continued to address her more formally as before, ‘Nan McDonald’. When speaking of McDonald in letters to Davis, however, Langley referred to McDonald by her Christian name.

To Langley’s great joy, The Pea Pickers was reprinted in 1958, the first reprint in sixteen years. Langley received the six author’s copies at the end of July 1958. (Perhaps there had been discussion about this the previous year, because there was no mention in the file that this was to occur.) ‘I was so glad to think that you were able to bring it out and the format and cover of the book attracts me very much...I read it with the same pleasure with which I read it years ago and love it as well as everyone does.’ The timing of the production of the book is interesting; the decision to reprint after all this time followed Langley’s visit. A few months later, on 21 November 1958, Langley sent Davis a new copy of ‘Wild Australia’, ‘fully revised and clean and ready to read, and really Australian this time, and I think, much improved on, and I hope you can use it’. As it was written as the sequel to White Topee, Langley felt it should be the next published work. She obviously did not feel that her prospects for future published work had diminished, and indeed was now working on another ‘good book of a strange but fresh texture, which I think you would like’, called ‘The Victorians’. ‘Wild Australia’, she said, ‘is now just the simple account of Steve’s ride over the alps and her work at Panlooks seeking forgetfulness of her love of Macca...[it’s] yours to do what you like with and I should be so glad if you put it away until such time as you can use it.’ Three days later, Langley wrote another letter

48 MSS 397. 26 August 1957.
50 MSS 405. 23 November 1958.
51 MSS 401. 30 July 1958.
52 MSS 403. 21 November 1958.
53 ibid.
to advise Davis of the dispatch of the manuscript with which the preceding letter had been sent.

It would appear from Langley’s references to the manuscript being ‘all revised and cleaned up’, and being ‘much nicer and more comfortable reading now, and easier to understand’ that discussions had been held with Langley regarding the expectations of the editors, with particular reference to ‘Wild Australia’. ‘It is full of Australian scenery as usual and I know Nan liked that part of it for she commended it when I saw her, and told me to do it all over again. Which I have done.’ From Langley’s observations on ‘Wild Australia’ it would seem that she had received words of encouragement from Davis and McDonald, and was inspired again to begin writing, perhaps to move on from her Australian experiences to her life in New Zealand. She referred again to ‘The Victorians’, and another book ‘The Golden Wattle Warriors’ ‘both very colourful books’ that were to come before ‘Bancroft House’. Davis responded promptly, with a letter on the 28 November acknowledging Langley’s advice about ‘Wild Australia’. The manuscript was received on 12 December 1958.

It is apparent in the letters of 1958 and 1959, following Langley’s return to New Zealand in August 1957 that the meeting with her editors was of great significance. Davis’s reluctance to edit by correspondence was reinforced by the progress she obviously made with Langley in a situation of direct communication. Davis had the opportunity to convey her expectations of an author, and, most importantly, Langley obviously took it all on board. From an editor’s point of view, authors needed to provide an appropriately typed clean copy of their work, and retain a copy for their own reference; they needed to consider their readers, and write to communicate. Langley could expect in return prompt consideration of her manuscripts and safe storage for those manuscripts that were not likely to be published in the short term, and an honest appraisal of her work. Langley appears to have been very reassured by the visit. Her subsequent letters were quite different in tone, perhaps best measured in her sanguine response to the next rejection letter that came her way.

The vote of confidence in reprinting was not lost on Langley either. She began writing with a new energy and sense of purpose; she shifted her focus to her New Zealand experiences; her marriage and children and the landscape all provided inspiration. If Davis found her strange ‘at first’, she appears to have altered her view of Langley’s temperament and character and potential. The Angus & Robertson staff put themselves out to facilitate her travel, and a warmth had entered their relationship which did not exist previously. It would seem that Davis, with her ‘great strength of

54 MSS 405. 23 November 1958.  
56 MSS 409. 12 December 1958.
personality and persuasiveness, offered Langley encouragement to continue with her writing, and Langley responded with a new found respect for the role her editor would play in her future literary endeavours.

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57 Barker, Anthony. op. cit. p. 21.
Chapter Seven

1959

Langley submitted four books to Angus & Robertson in 1959: ‘The Victorians’ (23 March); ‘Land of the Long White Cloud’ (12 October); ‘Last, Loneliest, Loveliest’ (20 October) and ‘The Old Mill’ (14 December). These last three represented a shift from the Australian theme that had dominated her previous work, to documenting her experiences in New Zealand. Although her manuscripts did not make any headway with the publisher (all four were rejected), Langley was content that her work was in safe hands, and that Davis would act in her interests; she was less demanding and more accepting of her publisher’s position in relation to her work. Davis, on her part, made sure she acknowledged the arrival of manuscripts promptly, and that they were read within an appropriate time frame.

Davis wrote to Langley five times during the course of the year, and although her letters were short, (in many instances dealing with issues in one sentence), she maintained a congenial tone and Langley responded positively.1 If things were more settled from Langley’s point of view, the same could not be said of her publisher. The company was under siege from a new management structure with very particular views on how the publishing section should operate. Davis herself was under threat professionally and Langley’s manuscripts stood little chance of success.

Langley suffered a good deal from flu and other illnesses throughout 1959. She felt her health was affected by the cold climate of New Zealand, and was determined to leave. She thought of travelling to London, and then she wrote to the Mayor of Athens, seeking ‘a small ancient hut somewhere on the shores of Piraeus where I can live and write as in ancient days and the rest of it...’2 Later, the talk was of Australia. But before she could do anything, she had ‘material’ she needed to ‘get rid of on to [Davis] before I go abroad to live...’3

On 12 March, Davis wrote to Langley with exciting news. Ruth Park had put in a bid for a fifteen-month option on dramatic, film and TV rights for The Pea Pickers. She was offering £50, ‘and if and when her adaptation (‘as a play or musical or otherwise’) earns money she would take 50% of the proceeds, or 60% if she makes a musical play and therefore has to share her earnings with a composer’. Davis strongly recommended that Langley accept the offer: ‘I can imagine Ruth making a splendid

1 Langley wrote 13 times to Beatrice Davis and Eric Russell during 1959.
2 Angus & Robertson: correspondence and Readers’ Reports: Langley, Eve. Mitchell Library. ML MSS 3269/47. MSS 69-631. MSS 415. 23 March 1959. All future references to the Langley documents that are contained under this file will be referred to using the MSS number within the file and the date.
3 MSS 415. 23 March 1959.
job of the adaptation. The material has such warmth and richness that I'm surprised no one has thought of this before.\(^4\)

Langley usually only visited the post office fortnightly, so she hadn’t received Ruth Park’s offer when she set off on 24 March to post the manuscript of ‘The Victorians’. ‘Herewith ‘The Victorians’...a fresh book and true to the life as lived up at Buffalo years ago, full of the wild and wooly [sic] past of Steve and Blue...it follows right on the heels of ‘Wild Australia’ and after it comes ‘The Golden Wattle Warriors’, which is to go on the roster next and be worked on.’\(^5\) She was busy writing four books at once and ‘making a good job of them all’.\(^6\) At the post office she discovered Davis’s ‘lovely letter...I am so pleased and happy’. Langley was sure Ruth Park would make a ‘wonderful, magnificent job of it...tell her to go right ahead’. She intended to put the money towards a fare to London, adding to the £20 deposit she had already paid at the Union Shipping ‘for my fare home to the old Dart’.\(^7\)

‘The Victorians’ reached Angus & Robertson on 8 April, and on 15 April, Davis let Langley know that it had arrived, and expressed light-hearted astonishment at Langley’s ambitions. ‘Fancy your being engaged on four books at once! And feeling you must finish them all before you go abroad to live. I shall be most curious to know what the Lord Mayor of Athens says in reply to Cybele’s request.’ She advised Langley to ‘say nothing whatever...publicly’ about Park’s offer. ‘The moment to start shouting will be when Ruth has not only completed the play but placed it with some brilliant and reputable producing company.’\(^8\) Whether she received this advice too late, or decided blithely to go ahead and announce the deal anyway, Langley organised a journalist to write up the proposal: ‘Mac Vincent of the Auckland Star gave the play and me and Ruth a good write up, for a start, as he likes The Pea Pickers very much’.\(^9\) She referred to £115 she had received from Angus & Robertson\(^10\) and ‘put it down’ on her fare to London, which was confirmed for 28 August. She expected to be in Sydney overnight on 1 September and would ‘see you all then’. With perhaps a broad hint to Davis to accelerate her payment from Park, she added, ‘As you can imagine, I shall be glad of any further cash available, my dove.’\(^11\)

The Report on ‘The Victorians’ was completed on 6 June possibly by Ella McFadyen, who was the principal outside reader at Angus & Robertson at this time.\(^12\)

\(^{4}\) MSS 411. 12 March 1959.
\(^{5}\) This was the covering letter to accompany ‘The Victorians’. MSS 413. 23 March 1959.
\(^{6}\) This is the second letter she wrote and sent on ahead of the manuscript ‘The Victorians’. MSS 415. 23 March 1959.
\(^{7}\) MSS 417. 24 March 1959.
\(^{8}\) MSS 421. 15 April 1959.
\(^{9}\) MSS 423. 27 April 1959.
\(^{10}\) Royalties from the new edition of The Pea Pickers? MSS 423. 27 April 1959.
\(^{11}\) MSS 423. 27 April 1959.
\(^{12}\) This deduction comes from looking closely at the signature, which has similarities to that of Eric Russell, although it is not the same. The style of the report is different also, and more sympathetic than those of Eric Russell. Ella was ‘a shrewd woman...who was also an author of children’s books.’ It is possible that the signature belongs to another second person who scrawled a note underneath the typed report. Bolton, Alec. Interview with Heather Rusden. 11, 14, 24 October, 7 November 1996. TRC 3523 ANL.
felt that this was 'a difficult Ms to report upon...because it is very long and really I
don't know what could be done with it'. It was mooted that it could be produced as ‘a
smallish book almost as a venture in Belles lettres but I don't suppose the author
would consent to this. It would mean far too drastic cutting.'\textsuperscript{13}

Rosemary Dobson, a self confessed ‘enthusiast for the writings of this author’ was
similarly reticent about ‘Wild Australia’. The Oscar Wilde section had been ‘almost
entirely excised from it’, and this was ‘certainly an improvement as in that respect the
first version was almost repellingly fantastic’, but the manuscript was still very long —
around 517 pages. Dobson felt she could not reverse her earlier opinion and
recommend publication, despite the ‘originality, even I almost think, genius, in Eve
Langley’s writing’. She again flagged the possibility of publishing ‘Bancroft
House’.\textsuperscript{14}

Ruth Park paid the £50 for the option on the dramatic, film and TV rights of The Pea
Pickers and the entire amount was forwarded to Langley on 14 July.\textsuperscript{15} Originally,
Davis had told Langley that ‘Our usual commission on such deals is 20% (10% for
films), which we should extract from money received and pass the rest on to you. For
instance when this option is signed we'll send you £40 of the £50 paid to us.’\textsuperscript{16} Angus
& Robertson apparently waived their commission, however, and Langley received the
full amount. Although this generosity benefited Langley in the short term it was the
kind of gesture that might well have brought Davis into the firing line. In her letter to
Langley, Davis noted that they were looking forward ‘very much’ to seeing her on 1
September, and then added a comment about ‘The Victorians’ and ‘Wild Australia’.
They were both ‘rather “difficult” books from the general public’s point of view, but
with some lovely stuff in them: for there is only one Eve Langley’.\textsuperscript{17} Her comment
seemed to indicate that she thought Langley would understand what was mean by
‘difficult’, but they would ‘be able to have a talk about it’ when Langley came to
Sydney in the following month. Davis obviously felt that a face-to-face discussion
would be more profitable than a written analysis. She did not anticipate that Langley
would react badly. They had obviously covered a lot of ground during the time they
spent together in Sydney.

Langley acknowledged the cheque, reported her typewriter had gone ‘bung’, and
wondered wryly ‘what means this “general public” note...But the two books are
alright with you, anyway.’\textsuperscript{18} Langley’s intention to discuss the book further with
Davis was thwarted, however, for on 19 August she wrote that her plans had ‘fallen
through’.\textsuperscript{19} She was having problems letting her house, couldn’t get hold of her birth
certificate,\textsuperscript{20} and was ‘pestered by having to get the anti small pox vaccine for
Ceylon...’ She proposed sending another manuscript ‘in stead [sic] of me’. She had

\textsuperscript{13} The Report is directed to Beatrice Davis. MSS 419. 5 June 1959.
\textsuperscript{14} MSS 425. 28 June 1959. Reader’s Report on ‘Wild Australia’.
\textsuperscript{15} MSS 427. 14 July 1959.
\textsuperscript{16} MSS 411. 12 March 1959.
\textsuperscript{17} MSS 427. 14 July 1959.
\textsuperscript{18} MSS 429. 23 July 1959.
\textsuperscript{19} MSS 431. 19 August 1959.
\textsuperscript{20} Curious, given her name change in 1954 would probably have required her birth certificate.
just got back her typewriter ‘which...broke down ...on the last four books’. ‘Last, Loneliest, Loveliest’ would be sent soon, ‘and get ready for the deluge of 3 more books, one about Australia and two about New Zealand’.21 Davis sent a brief missive expressing their disappointment that they would not see her in Sydney that year, adding ‘It is good to know that you are writing so freely and happily. I love the title, “Last, Loneliest, Loveliest”.’22

‘Last, Loneliest, Loveliest’ did not arrive first, however. On 12 October Langley sent instead her ‘newest book, THE LAND OF THE LONG WHITE CLOUD, written for you...I think you will like it and put it by for publication in years to come...’23 The manuscript was received on 27 October, but not reviewed until 14 December.24 Langley described the book as ‘All about my wild wanderings from Paekakariki to Wanganui in the North Island. Full of color and New Zealanders and bits of an old journal kept in those days. Fine prose, too, very godlike and cloud filled and sparkling with imagination.’25 A week later, on 19 October, she was able to ‘pack up the latest book, LAST, LONELIEST, LOVELIEST’ which was ‘all about my life over on the North Shore in Auckland and full of rich warm glowing material from a journal kept in those days of marriage to an artist husband and a batch of children as well...Keep the book, put it away, won’t you?’26 In this letter, Langley presented to Davis a mapped out scenario of ten books that she intended to write, all with vivid, if not particularly illuminating titles. She was not planning to write them sequentially, although they appeared to have a chronological autobiographical sequence.

‘Last, Loneliest, Loveliest’, which Langley sent in October, followed ‘on the heels of those others I am sending you after a while’.27 After ‘The Land of the Long White Cloud’,28 ‘Demeter of Dublin Street’29 would follow. The next in line would be ‘The Colossus of Rhodes Street’; then ‘The Old Mill’30 ‘Last, Loneliest, Loveliest’31 slotted in next, to be followed by ‘Remote, Apart’;32 ‘Portrait of the Artist at Chelsea’;33 ‘The Saunterer’;34 ‘Beautiful Isles Of The Sea’, and lastly, ‘Apollyon Regius’. Such breathtaking titles were not lost on Davis, although she did not make any immediate acknowledgment of this veritable brood of ‘children’35 Langley was nurturing, and which she was to foster. In 1999, Lucy Frost released an edited version of the six novels written about Langley’s New Zealand experiences. The production of Wilde Eve involved ‘compressing 2,500 pages into three hundred’, which serves as an indication of the volume of writing that Langley was producing at this time.36

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21 MSS 431. 19 August 1959.
22 MSS 437. 9 September 1959.
23 MSS 433. 12 October 1959.
25 This was the airmail letter advising of the dispatch of the manuscript of ‘The Land of the Long White Cloud’. MSS 439. 12 October 1959.
26 MSS 441. 19 October 1959.
27 ibid.
28 Those books with an asterix are to be found in manuscript form in the Mitchell Library: Sydney.
29 ‘Demeter of Dublin Street’ has safely arrived and taken her place with the other children of your brain.’ MSS 481. March 1960.
‘The Nimrod Type’ and ‘The Australian’ had been shown to Nan McDonald on the trip to Sydney in 1956, but Langley was yet to copy them out. They, at any rate, preceded ‘Land of the Long White Cloud’. Finally, there was ‘Golden Wattle Warriors’ which took the total to ten. Langley acknowledged that it ‘sounds a bit weird,’ adding philosophically ‘but that’s how it is...10 books to come...just put them away somewhere...’\(^{31}\) If Davis was daunted by such a prodigious planned output, she didn’t say so.

The next day, 20 October, Langley wrote yet another letter to Davis. She was unwell, and flagged the possibility of moving to Australia instead ‘for this cold wet country is getting me down,’ and England, she had been told was ‘far worse’. She had written to agents ‘all over the place,’ and was looking for a property priced between £500 - £1,000. She appealed to Davis for assistance: ‘I just want to pack up and come straight back to Australia...so dear Beatrice, if you can HELP a very sick writer to find a house and live in, I’ll be so glad.’\(^{32}\) At age 56, Langley was determined to return and having set her mind to it, she wasted no time putting her plans into action.

‘Land Of The Long White Cloud’ arrived at Angus & Robertson on 27 October 1959, and Davis wrote within the week to Langley. She was sympathetic to Langley’s dilemma, but felt there would be ‘nothing within a cooee of Sydney for £500 to £1,000 I am afraid’. She said that Eric Russell would send the ‘Saturday House and Land Pages from the *Sydney Morning Herald*’, but suggested another option might be Gippsland ‘and your old haunts’.\(^{33}\) Eric Russell never did send the *Sydney Morning Herald* pages, despite Langley’s entreaties in subsequent letters.

He had been reading Langley’s manuscript ‘Last Loneliest Loveliest’, and declared it ‘more fit for the psychiatrist couch than the publisher’. He was appalled at the ‘lack of reticence in her most private affairs,’ and read ‘with disgust’ a lascivious description of Langley’s husband Hilary. ‘Most of it seems to be the sort of material that people keep to themselves...VERY SAD AND QUITE HOPELESS. Eric.’\(^{34}\) Nan McDonald was of the view that ‘the first report somewhat over-emphasises the author’s interest in sex’. However she agreed the manuscript was ‘shapeless and much too introspective,’ and not worth publishing, despite the ‘old brilliance and originality [which] are not entirely lacking’.\(^{35}\)

By December 9, Langley had almost finished ‘The Old Mill’. This was the book which was intended to come before ‘Last, Loneliest, Loveliest’, in Langley’s chronology. ‘It's a very good book’, wrote Langley. ‘The life of fantastic artists and writers living around the old wind mill right in Auckland, years ago...I think you'd like this book, it’s quaint and interesting....’ She was also writing ‘a lovely book, springlike and faerie, called ‘Demeter of Dublin Street’, all about Wanganui and you’d like the poetry of it’. She had largely recovered from her illness; the weather was picking up, and she was expecting her son Karl Marx for the holidays. ‘I am so

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\(^{31}\) MSS 441. 19 October 1959.

\(^{32}\) MSS 443. 20 October 1959.

\(^{33}\) MSS 447. 5 November 1959.


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busy writing and working that I shall have to put down the tasks and entertain the youth, I suppose with what energy I've got about'. She wished Davis a merry Christmas from 'Eve in Type and Eve in Ink...'36

Five days later and 'The Old Mill' was on its way to Sydney.37 Eric Russell, meanwhile, was tearing his hair out over 'Land Of The Long White Cloud', which he described as 'the aimless chronicle of an irresponsible person who follows her own moods till they run her into misery, but never considers she has any duty to anyone. THERE IS NOTHING HERE FOR THE GENERAL READER. Eric'38 McDonald was more circumspect: 'I agree with the criticism from above, but I should add that there are touches of brilliance, and there is interest in Eve Langley's responses to the New Zealand landscape.'39

McDonald's appreciation of those touches of 'brilliance' was vindicated by the launch, forty years later, of Wilde Eve, but in 1959, she had to agree with Russell that the novels in the state they were submitted were 'hardly publishable'.40 Unfortunately for Langley, there were forces at work in the publishing world that had nothing to do with her, but that effectively consigned her manuscripts to the vaults at Angus & Robertson. The editors in the publishing section had been under a great deal of pressure during the 1950s, and not just from the mammoth task of producing the ten volumes of the Australian Encyclopaedia. With its launch in 1958, it was hoped that things would settle down, but this did not happen. The closing years of the 1950s brought a shift in culture at Angus & Robertson and a push from shareholders to be more assertive in realising the commercial potential of the company. One shareholder in particular was making his presence felt, a New Zealander by the name of Walter Vincent Burns, who had been acquiring shares since at least 1951.41 His substantial shareholdings led to his appointment as a director in 1959 and then managing director the following year.

Burns introduced many changes, but his primary concern was the 'bottom line'. There were suspicions that his interest lay more with the prime real estate the company owned, rather than the core business of Angus & Robertson. Alec Bolton recalled that the directors, who were 'a pretty unsophisticated lot',42 thought Burns 'might be able' to be helpful in inaugurating a few new practices', but it soon became apparent that he had another agenda: to 'carve up the firm and sell parts of it off'.43 'Burns brought two people to the Board of Director from outside the firm, ending the tradition begun

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36 MSS 451. 9 December 1959.
41 'Burns had been buying shares in Angus & Robertson as far back as 1951, and for all I know, earlier than that — I was not able to look back [in the records] earlier than that. By the late fifties, he'd acquired a very large parcel of shares and I think he wrote to the board and asked if he could be taken onto the board.' Bolton, Alec. op. cit.
42 ibid.
43 ibid.
by George Robertson of promoting members of staff to the Board of Directors. He initiated the reconstitution of the company as several independent subsidiaries: a retailing, publishing and printing, each with its own director. ‘I think he threw his weight about to a very great extent and put a stop to a lot of books that were being published or that had been undertaken or were about to be published. There was significant concern at the board level and amongst shareholders at the impact of these changes, and what they meant for the future of the company.

Arthur G Smith played a central role in Burns’ removal from the Board. He recalled that the staff at Angus and Robertson were ‘entirely unhappy’ with Burns’ leadership. He [Burns] succeeded in getting most of the senior members of the staff of Angus and Robertson by the ears. Those who could afford to leave, left and A & R lost, through Burns, a number of really good staff who had been there for years. Smith, along with George Ferguson, plotted to ‘somehow or other get Burns out of [Angus & Robertson] before the company [was] ruined’. They succeeded, and Burns retired from the Board at the AGM in 1960. George Ferguson was later appointed managing director. Burns’ substantial shareholdings were subsequently sold to Sir Frank Packer’s Australian Consolidated Press, which then mounted two unsuccessful takeover bids in 1960.

The two years of business expansion and company reorganisation had a profound effect on the staff at Angus & Robertson. Loyalties were divided and criticisms of the way in which the publishing section was run became more voluble, and more public. Bolton recalled that some people – particularly those in the sales area – within the publishing section were critical of the way the division was operated. ‘Some people...thought that the firm was undertaking too many literary books – that were good...but were not really producing a lot of revenue...Some people on the sales side felt that more realistic...practical...revenue-seeking approaches [to publishing] should be followed. People lined up on opposing sides – the Ferguson ‘camp’ and

45 ibid.
46 Bolton, Alec. op. cit.
50 ibid.
52 ‘In 1962, [Consolidated Press] sold its 30% shareholding in A & R Ltd to three groups of investors: William Collins (British Publishers) bought 21% while 3-6% was acquired by other British publishers. The remaining 5-7% was acquired by a company formed by several A & R directors...In 1970, Collins sold its shareholding to Tjuringa Securities, an associate of Ipec Insurance Ltd...In 1978, Ipec Insurance Ltd became known as Ipec Holdings Ltd... in the following year the A & R bookshops were sold to...Gordon and Gotch (Australasia) Ltd. In 1989 Angus & Robertson’s publishing division was merged with Collins (Australia) owned by Rupert Murdoch.’ ‘Guide to the Angus & Robertson Archives in the Mitchell Library.’ op. cit. pp. viii-x.
53 Bolton, Alec. op. cit.
the Burns ‘camp’ – creating ‘more tensions and anxieties, and estrangements between people who had been very good friends with one another’.54

One of the casualties during this period was Beatrice Davis. Towards the end of 1959, George Ferguson appointed Alec Bolton director of publishing in the newly formed publishing company over Davis; a move Bolton described as ‘a grievous thing that should never have happened’. He saw the position (as Head of A & R (Publishers) Pty Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of A & R) as ‘nominal’, and ‘embarrassing’. ‘It was certainly embarrassing to Beatrice’s other staff, who were all good friends of mine. But most of them were women and most of them felt, probably quite rightly, that another male chauvinist blow had been struck...[Beatrice Davis] was an important person in the firm, the firm’s most senior and highly respected woman employee, but she didn’t enjoy great formal status.’ In Bolton’s view, however, it wasn’t just a question of gender bias. The company, he said, ‘had a strong literary thrust with Beatrice, and she was...criticised for that tendency...It was obvious, even in the fifties, that firms couldn’t survive merely on publishing what was offered to them; they had to create books...I was perhaps seen as somebody who had a few ideas for books that might be created...also, I was...younger than Beatrice...and perhaps it was felt that I might be able to make some contribution.’

Davis did not allow the change in status to affect her friendship with Bolton, however. ‘Beatrice was a close friend then and continued on that basis and bore no resentment to me whatsoever, which was a wonderful tribute to her large mindedness I think.’ But Bolton’s new situation was not congenial, and he resigned from Angus & Robertson the following year, in 1960.

When Richard Walsh eventually sacked Davis in 1973, his comments were more pointed. When he talked about standards, he was talking about financial results: ‘We will be raising our internal standards. We need to be more scrupulous with our standards. There are some books that we published...that we shouldn’t have. We can’t afford to publish books that are commercially not viable. The book industry is a tough business.’55

It is not surprising then, with all the change happening at a company level and within the publishing section, and to Davis personally, that Langley’s manuscripts languished. There would seem to have been a deliberate policy change within the new publishing company to rein in the resources expended on those books considered ‘literary’, but whether this view was applied to Langley particularly, there is no way of knowing. Davis did not convey any hint of her own uncertain professional future to Langley; self-pity was not, apparently, her style.56 Langley showed no sign of awareness of the changing situation at Angus & Robertson, or of Davis’s altered circumstances within the company.

54 ibid.
56 ‘She recognised [self-pity] as a wasteful, non-productive self-indulgence’. Despite demonstrating great courage in her own difficulties, Nan McDonald recalled that ‘Authors, friends, fellow workers, casual acquaintances, all [brought] their troubles to Beatrice for her sensitive sympathy and practical aid’. Barker, Anthony. op. cit. p. 29-30.
For Langley, change was a constant and sought after companion. But it was a duplicitous relationship: on the one hand providing new experiences and material for writing, on the other, shifting the ground beneath her. Her desire to return to Australia became a compelling factor in her life during 1959; surviving without an income in a new situation was the challenge for 1960. But even in this, Langley called upon Davis for assistance, and her editor responded, intervening with the Department of Social Services to assist with Langley's application for a pension. Having embarked on a new direction with her writing – exploring her New Zealand experiences – Langley was unstoppable. She had to get the material down on paper; the review and editing of the material was not a priority. She saw Angus & Robertson as a repository, a way of storing material that might one day find an audience. Davis was a conduit to her future publications, but Langley had no great expectations that this was likely in the short term.
Eve Langley organised her permanent relocation to Australia in May 1960, although it represented a significant drain on her energy and resources. But having settled at last, she was very satisfied with the bush setting of her tiny house in the Blue Mountains. Not surprisingly, her writing for publication faded into the background. She submitted two novels early in the year: ‘The Old Mill’, her fourth book in the planned New Zealand sequence, arrived at Angus & Robertson on 6 January 1960, and ‘Demeter of Dublin Street’ on 25 February. Both were rejected. The shift in focus from artistic output to the practicalities of moving from one country to the next was reflected in the letters between author and editor. Angus & Robertson continued to review Langley’s books, and to attend to the personal matters raised by her – assisting her to secure an Invalid Pension, for example – but their care reflected a concern for her physical and mental health, rather than interest in her professional development.

On 7 January, Davis wrote an encouraging note acknowledging the arrival of ‘The Old Mill’: ‘So glad to hear from you and to know that you are writing so happily and so prolifically – although heaven knows when we shall be able to publish all these so attractively titled novels’. She raised the possibility of seeking funding from the Commonwealth Literary Fund for further publication of Langley’s work: ‘The point is that you, with your genius for poetry and fantasy, are a writer for the few who are capable of appreciating your gifts.’ She wondered ‘which ought to come next?’ and said that she would talk it over with Nan.1

This was the first of seven letters that Davis wrote to Langley in 1960. Her letters rather abruptly ceased in June, (resuming again spasmodically in 1961), and Eric Russell took over as chief correspondent, explaining, late in July, that Davis was too busy ‘at the moment’ to write.2 Despite his obvious disdain for Langley as an author, Russell maintained cordial relations with her (they had met in Sydney in 1956), although his role in Langley’s life was essentially an administrative one. It was, perhaps, a final acknowledgment that the editorial relationship – in its most precise definition of collecting, preparing and arranging materials for publication3 – between Davis and Langley had formally come to an end.

The Reader’s Reports on ‘The Old Mill’ were consistent with previous reports on other Langley manuscripts by Eric Russell and Nan McDonald.4 Russell described the

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1 *Angus & Robertson: correspondence and Readers’ Reports: Langley, Eve*. Mitchell Library. ML MSS 3269/47. MSS 69-631. MSS 459. 7 January 1960. MSS 459. 7 January 1960. All future references to the Langley documents that are contained under this file will be referred to using the MSS number within the file and the date.
2 MSS 503. 26 July 1960.
4 MSS 459. n.d.
book as one of ‘the long and incoherent series of this writer’s self-revelations which she styles novels’ that was ‘lardered with adjectives...wearisome and full of repetition’. He concluded: ‘The writer has pursued her private line of thought and emotion to the point where she moves in a world of her own, governed by values not recognised by others, and lighted exclusively by her own temperament. Thus she has completely lost touch with potential readers, who cannot see matter for interest in the host of small details with which she is engrossed.’

Nan McDonald’s Report echoed views expressed on other occasions: ‘I think the above report is too severe; certainly the work has many faults, and is shapeless, but there are good things in it here and there. However, I agree that it is hardly publishable.’ The difference between the two Readers’ Reports is notable. While the two readers largely agreed on the stylistic difficulties the manuscripts presented, McDonald was much more conscious of the merits of Langley’s work. Russell on the other hand, saw nothing of value in the work Langley was putting forward. Putting aside his views about the style of writing, his prejudices in terms of the content are glaringly obvious: he hated the self-revelations Langley insisted on describing, and he felt profoundly uncomfortable with the material dealing with her relationship with her husband. He also took the moral high ground on matters of ‘responsibility’ and ‘duty’. It seems highly probable that Russell had read Langley’s file that included the damaging letters from June.

When in early January Davis referred to the need to apply for government funding for Langley’s future work, it was, perhaps, also an acknowledgment that the time and effort required to get Langley’s work into shape were not going to come from the coffers of Angus & Robertson. Langley, however, gently disputed Davis’s assertion that the books she had sent were ‘fantastic’: ‘I don’t think those books are awfully fantastic, dear, since they’re just about quite extraordinary life as it used to be lived in Auckland’. She was ‘amused to think of you and Nan wondering what to do with all these books’, and advised her to store them, and not to ‘worry about publishing them’. There was only one more book that she intended sending to Davis in the short term, and that was ‘Demeter of Dublin Street’. After this, she proposed giving up writing for a time. This particular letter was written within a week of Davis’s early January letter, and was quite buoyant in tone. She promised to be in Australia by February, and said that her friend Roger Mellsop had attempted to dissuade her from leaving each time she proposed it. Langley playfully wove a little narrative around herself and Mellsop travelling to Rome – Langley as both Nero and Julius Caesar, Mellsop as Mark Anthony. Davis responded in the same light-hearted manner: ‘I loved your last letter...I have confidence in the capacity of you both to create a fine Roman scandal...This is just to send you my love and tell you we have all been thinking of you.’ As Langley parceled up ‘Demeter of Dublin Street’ on 6 February, she professed tiredness. Nevertheless, she hoped to be in Sydney by 18 February, and

7 MSS 461. 13 January 1960.
8 ibid.
9 MSS 465. 5 February 1960.
then sail 'on to Europe by the *Orion* of March 14th'. She imagined landing at Naples and racing up to Rome 'by the first chariot standing in at the wharf of Napuli' to fling herself 'on to the columns of Home or Rome as fast as I can'. She was uncertain about whether she would actually manage it, though, and as things turned out, she didn't, laid low with 'swamp fever', and an adverse reaction to her vaccinations. Instead, she re-booked to sail on 31 March, and expected to be in Sydney by 11 April.

'Demeter of Dublin Street' arrived on 25 February, and Davis acknowledged the manuscript with the observation that 'she' (the manuscript) had 'taken her place with the other children of your brain'. Davis was looking forward to seeing her in Sydney, and sent her love. Nan McDonald wrote the principal report of 'Demeter of Dublin Street', and the verdict was sadly predictable: 'It is all too shapeless and introspective to hold the reader's interest, though there are moments of brilliance.'

The correspondence from this point took on an administrative tone; there was very little to be said about Langley's writing. She had called a halt to the writing of further books, and Angus & Robertson had nothing to report by way of editing or production of any of her material. On 1 March, Langley wrote to Davis that the £50 cheque that had been sent in July the previous year from Ruth Park for dramatic, film and television rights to *The Pea Pickers* had been returned by the bank, which refused to cash it. (She noted that nothing had come of Park's proposed adaptation.) The cheque was too old, and Langley requested a replacement. She had applied for a pension on her return to Australia, but had not yet heard, adding that 'If I can get the pension in Australia, I shall come over and live near you – well – somewhere out on the Central Western Plains out Manildra way where I started from.' Davis had no immediate reply to this particular prospect, but she arranged promptly for the £50 to be included in the next royalty cheque.

Her querulousness was prompted in part by an opportunity to purchase, extraordinarily cheaply, 'a small house' in Katoomba at 1 Clydebank Road, for £150. It had four rooms and was on a small parcel of land 50 by 150.

Her querulousness was prompted in part by an opportunity to purchase, extraordinarily cheaply, 'a small house' in Katoomba at 1 Clydebank Road, for £150. It had four rooms and was on a small parcel of land 50 by 150. She wanted to send off a deposit and had cabled the real estate agent, Soper Bros, saying she would take the place 'at once', but had received no reply. She was trying to secure a berth on

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10 MSS 467. 6 February 1960.
12 ibid.
15 MSS 471. 1 March 1960.
16 MSS 473. n.d. Memorandum from Miss Fisher, Editorial Department to Mrs Mackenzie
17 MSS 475. 8 March 1960.
18 MSS 477. 23 March 1960.
20 MSS 477. 23 March 1960.
the ship the Monowai, which was heavily booked and had succeeded in doing so on 11 April. She didn’t send the letter immediately, and a week later added an addendum. Langley urged Davis to send over the money as soon as possible ‘as I am broke as usual, and I must sail by May 20\(^{20}\) as the Monowai is doing a Pacific run after that date...so over with the £50, dear one, to your ever loving Eve’.\(^{21}\)

The cheque had been sent by 7 April, and Davis wrote expressing her astonishment — and scepticism at the low price being asked for the property (‘I keep wondering whether somebody did not leave a nought off by mistake’) and offered her assistance.\(^{22}\) Langley soon replied with the news that she had actually secured the place for £75!\(^{23}\) She was booked on the Monowai on 20 May, and expected Roger Mellsop to follow her (‘I don’t know, however. Spose he will. He said he would.’)\(^{24}\) She was not well again, but had booked to sail for Europe on the liner Patris. Her writing was ‘off for the season due to the cold’.\(^{25}\) Davis wrote a few lines in response on 4 May,\(^{26}\) and asked an assistant to check whether Eve was indeed booked on the Monowai.\(^{27}\) She hoped Langley would ‘have somebody to look after you and to bully you into keeping warm...’\(^{28}\)

Langley was very excited about the move, and envisaged herself in a Dad and Dave scenario.\(^{29}\) ‘I’ll land with all the old outback traditions on board, ...a sort of ‘On Our Selection’ visit, with pots and pans and all the old stuff out of the old place when Dad and the family shifted to the new place.’\(^{30}\) She was quite unwell and asked Davis to forward her application for an Invalid Pension (which she enclosed) to the director of Social Services. The application required a signature from ‘an elector of the Commonwealth’, and Langley begged her to sign it. ‘I don’t want anyone to look after me, I just want to clear out of this country and fly to Australia...Let me get back and be Steve Langley again and drop the past behind me in the lovely blue bush.’ There was still talk of Roger Mellsop following her to Australia in due course.\(^{31}\) Davis signed the form immediately, and on 18 May sent a personal letter of endorsement to the director of Social Services.

\(^{21}\) ibid.
\(^{22}\) MSS 483. 7 April 1960.
\(^{23}\) MSS 485. 25 April 1960.
\(^{24}\) ibid.
\(^{25}\) ibid.
\(^{26}\) MSS 487. 4 May 1960.
\(^{28}\) MSS 487. 4 May 1960.
\(^{31}\) In January 1958, Langley’s friend Gloria Rawlinson wrote that she had heard news ‘regarding you engagement. Allow me to offer felicitations and the earnest wish of happy days and nights in the years to come...O love you for your pluck and your eyes which see so much and your heart which is brave enough to receive everything. What more can one say?’ Rawlinson, Gloria. Letter to Eve Langley. January 1958. Eve Langley Papers. Mitchell Library: Sydney. MSS 4188 (6) Item 2 Correspondence 20 April 1954 – 8 November 1972.
'Having corresponded with Eve Langley for over 20 years, I can assure you of her bona fides. She has no income that I know of (the sale of her two books having ceased, except for a ‘remainder’ at much reduced price on which no royalty is paid); and she has been in ill-health for some time. Mrs Clark intends to sail from New Zealand on the Monowai on 20th May, and, knowing how little money she will have, I should like to do anything I can to help her secure the pension as soon as possible.\(^{32}\)

It would seem that Langley did not call at the Angus & Robertson office when she arrived in Australia, but went directly to her house in Katoomba, for on 1 June Davis wrote anxiously that they had been thinking of her, and ‘wondering how you have settled into your Blue Mountains House’.\(^{33}\) Davis was worried about Langley’s health and asked her to let her know how she was. Davis also offered to ‘personally’ visit someone in the Department in an effort to secure her the pension, and had taken advice as how best to secure a refund for her fare on the Patris from the Union Steamship Company.\(^{34}\) Langley wrote on 9 June to say she was ‘settled well among the blue tongue lizards and the tiger snakes and Sydney wattles Waratah at above address...the free and lovely crows and currawongs, the forest is really lovely. Australia, Felix, or Australia Beatrix, is home to the wandering exile, and I wish I never ever left it.’\(^{35}\) Langley’s spirits were more subdued, however, when she wrote again a fortnight later.\(^{36}\) It was cold and wet, and she was ‘so down to it, I can scarcely write’. She was grateful for the advice on the refund and had used the £123 as payment for her youngest son Karl Marx to come to Australia, despite her desperate need for money herself, for she had not yet secured her pension and there were costs associated with the move. She asked Davis to keep lobbying on her behalf.

This last letter conveyed a tone of appeal and dependency that Davis might well have begun to feel was an inappropriate characteristic in what was, essentially, a professional relationship. From here on, Eric Russell took over the file, and he was much more brisk. ‘Beatrice is rather busy at the moment and has asked me to drop you a line about your pension.’ He had visited the Department of Social Services, where it was explained that this was essentially ‘a matter entirely between the Department and yourself (it has really nothing to do with Angus & Robertson) nevertheless very kindly went into it and was able to tell me in the end that you should not have much longer to wait...let us know when it comes, won’t you?’\(^{37}\) His concluding remarks encouraged her to buck up and take ‘great gulps of mountain air’. She received word about the pension by 24 August. It was £192 per annum, somewhat less than the £234 she had been getting in New Zealand.\(^{38}\) But no money actually arrived until about the second week of September.\(^{39}\) ‘I am so glad to get the pension, for to live by the pen is so dreadfully miserable, don’t you think?’ she wrote

\(^{32}\) MSS 493. 18 May 1960. Beatrice Davis to The Director, Social Services Consolidated, 50 Carrington Street Sydney.

\(^{33}\) MSS 495. 1 June 1960.

\(^{34}\) ibid.

\(^{35}\) MSS 499. 9 June 1960.


\(^{37}\) MSS 503. 26 July 1960.

\(^{38}\) ibid.

\(^{39}\) MSS 507. 24 August 1960.
to Russell.\textsuperscript{40} Langley had at first attempted to continue her correspondence with Davis, writing of Karl Marx's visit, describing the intricacies of her financial affairs, and how she was feeling.\textsuperscript{41} But she seemed to resign herself to communications with Russell, and sent him three letters during the remainder of the year.\textsuperscript{42}

Russell did not seem to have any natural sympathy for Langley, although he tried hard. ‘Glad to hear that you are feeling like a million; you will probably be feeling like two million when summer comes to the Blue Mountains...by the way are your sheep good lawn mowers?’\textsuperscript{43} Then in November ‘What is your favourite radio programme? At this end of the world it is hard to get away from the Top Forty...’\textsuperscript{44} Langley continued to write in much the same vein to Russell as she had to Davis. She spoke of her visits from Karl Marx who had been travelling,\textsuperscript{45} (‘He is so very handsome and brown...we bought two bottles of wine and celebrated’\textsuperscript{46}), and her hopes of getting ‘Wild Australia’ published. She asked for copies of the second edition of\textit{The Pea Pickers} in September\textsuperscript{47}—and received 25 by October, thanks to Russell’s prompt action.\textsuperscript{48} By the end of 1960, she seemed happily established, having worked out the logistics of money and settled into her property: ‘...rain is here, the earth’s wet and the grass is green. The hazy purple glance of the violet wild flowers blazes in your eye and the blue orchids and other splendours of the bush are so wonderful. Dear Australia! Such a lovely land.’\textsuperscript{49} ‘Neighbours and friends’ had provided assistance with ‘gear’ that she needed.\textsuperscript{50} She was corresponding with June, who was very impressed with what she saw as typical Langley fortitude. ‘Its wonderful, to think how you landed it...Steve I would [love?], just to be there to do what you like, the Langley’s are wonderful for sudden colossal moves which change a whole life time, the other clods aren’t a bit interesting.’\textsuperscript{51} Langley was 56, and destined to stay put for several years, but she had certainly not relinquished her dreams to travel to Europe, which she embarked upon five years later, in 1965. She and Davis continued to correspond spasmodically over the next year, but there was precious little to sustain the relationship. Optimism surged on both sides every now and then; both Davis and Langley always hoped for a renewal in the professional relationship that had spanned two decades. But there were insurmountable difficulties for both of them, and no amount of good will was going to transform thousands of pages of manuscript into another book like\textit{The Pea Pickers}.

\textsuperscript{40}MSS 507. 24 August 1960.
\textsuperscript{41}MSS 505. 28 July 1960.
\textsuperscript{43}MSS 519. 28 September 1960.
\textsuperscript{44}MSS 521. 9 November 1960.
\textsuperscript{45}MSS [no number]. October 1960.
\textsuperscript{46}\textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{47}MSS 515. 19 September 1960.
\textsuperscript{49}Given the quantity of books forwarded to Langley, it is possible that the book had not sold particularly well.
Chapter Nine

1961-1974

In the last fifteen years of her life, Langley wrote and travelled and rekindled to some small degree her relationship with her children. She submitted two more books to Angus & Robertson: ‘Remote, Apart’ (29 September 1962); and ‘Portrait of the Artist’ (14 April 1965). ‘The Saunterer’, which ended before the narrative reached Langley’s incarceration, was not recorded as having been submitted to the publisher, although it resides with the other manuscripts in the Mitchell Library. She sent her ‘Scotch College Diary’ of 1931 (rewritten in 1971) to Angus & Robertson in October 1971.1

Beatrice Davis never gave up on Langley, and periodically expressed her optimism that something would come of her unpublished work. The frequency of letters between them dwindled gradually; there was little to talk about. The moments of brilliance that shone through in Langley’s writing were appreciated, particularly by Nan McDonald, who consistently read her work, and reviewed all the manuscripts together sometime between March 1960 and September 1962.2 But a lack of resources, concern about aspects of libel, the introspective nature of the manuscripts, and the amount of work necessary to pull the manuscripts into shape meant that nothing was salvaged. The Pea Pickers, however, continued to find a ready and appreciative audience, and was reprinted to great acclaim in 1966.3

Langley revisited her old stamping grounds in Gippsland periodically, and in 1965 pursued her dream to discover Greece, wooed by the notion she had somehow been there before: ‘What will it be like? You feel sure you were there long ago.’5 She became ill almost immediately on landing, and lurched from one crisis to another, until she was finally repatriated home with great effort on the part of Douglas Stewart and Angus & Robertson, who rallied round to arrange funds. She wrote notes constantly while she was travelling, then rewrote them over and over on her return,

2 MSS 573. n.d. Nan McDonald. ‘General readers report on 8 of Langley’s novels.’ The eight manuscripts were ‘Wild Australia’; ‘The Victorians’; ‘Bancroft House’; ‘The Land of the Long White Cloud’; ‘Demeter of Dublin Street; ‘The Old Mill’; and ‘Last, Loneliest, Loveliest’.
3 Angus & Robertson: correspondence and Readers’ Reports: Langley, Eve. Mitchell Library. ML MSS 3269/47. MSS 69-631. MSS 591. Reviews of The Pea Pickers on rerelease. All future references to the Langley documents that are contained under this file will be referred to using the MSS number within the file and the date.
sometimes many years later. It is difficult to know which writing is contemporary and which came later. She was constantly gathering together the frayed edges of her life, and remembering, revisiting, and rewriting. Even her ‘contemporary writing’ was overlaid by memories. The result was dense matting of fact and imagination, rather than the ‘tapestry’ she might have preferred. She wrote even when there was ‘no need to write…but the pen traces letters much as the chill wind traces the earth...’

Part of her documentary approach to recording her life made use of visual images: she sketched and painted and took photographs. Her photography – usually in black and white – was approached in much the same way as her writing: collecting, diarising, recording, but everything very close up: there are no panoramic photos, and they are often out of focus and enclosing. In September 1970, she took a picture of her manuscript cupboard. She photographed rubbish, trees, water tanks, and the bush. There are images of her house that are framed by windows: photos from outside looking in, and inside looking out, from every angle, but no views with perspective. Another vivid image from the 1970s is that of her little dolls, laid out in the sun, all neatly arranged in the bush like a little bush burial. There is also a photo of Langley herself, in a woollen turban-like hat and striped scarf torn at the edge, tied around her head. She has on a big coat and the characteristic strap of bag around her chest; her mouth is open, she looks bewildered.

In early January 1966 she mused on the lonely life she had chosen: ‘I am home again from Europe…I think of the days of Blue, Jim and Macca as I sweep out the dusty bed room…what a chronicle of days! In the silent lonely bush I love. The gods seem as of old to be vaguely wandering about me and my circumstances. There’s nothing to write about. I seem to be wasting paper, but, not having anyone to talk to, as of old I like to write.’

In some ways this seems strange, because in 1961, her sister June also moved to Katoomba, buying a ‘quite suburban’ house at 7 Hindeman Street, some distance from Langley. But their relations varied in warmth and continuity. They seemed happiest writing to each other, which they did constantly while Langley was travelling about. In early December 1964, June Langley sent a vitriolic letter to ‘Miss Davis’ denouncing Langley as schizophrenic – ‘She’s obviously mental and everyone knows it.’ Davis did not respond.

The correspondence file during this period is lightly scattered with often mundane requests from Langley, and provides scant information about her activities and

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8 ibid.
10 Stewart, Meg. Interview with author. 5 November 1999.
12 MSS 529. 2 December 1964.
thoughts. Langley wrote twice to Davis in 1961, and the tone was plaintive. On 7 April she described a trip to the Sydney show, where she ‘whiled about on the golden and glittering singing merrygoround, Paris, 1894, with the children to the tune of Moonlight and Roses’. She appealed to Davis to do what she could to get ‘Wild Australia’ out in book form one day...I should love to have another book published, as it seems years since you published me. Karl had visited her, and she wondered whether the ‘Darcy Nilands’ were ever going to produce The Pea Pickers ‘at all, at all?’ Davis caught Langley’s tone, and on April 19 promised to talk to Nan next time she ‘comes up from Wollongong, and get ready to make an appeal to the Commonwealth Literary Fund for some financial help’. This would not be until the following year, however as they had ‘far too many C.L.F. sort of books’ on [their] hands at the moment’. But she was sympathetic to Langley’s feelings on the matter: ‘I understand...how difficult it is for you to settle down to more writing until the books you have already written make their bow to the public. Believe me, I shall do my very best.’ Langley wrote straight back on April 21 asking for the name of a good stationer, as she was ready to start copying out another book. She dwelt again on her need to have another book published. ‘I feel so static without a book being published to color the days. I shall just have to start writing again in a very colorful Persian, Arabian style rich tapestry poetry to suit my own yearnings and feed on that until you can help me.’ Miss Fisher from the editorial department wrote back saying it would just be ‘much simpler’ if she found a stationer in Katoomba to supply her needs. ‘Beatrice says she is sorry there was no time to write herself.’

In September 1962, a brief note accompanied ‘Remote, Apart’, the sequel to ‘Last Loveliest, Loneliest’. This, Langley observed, ‘may be about the end of the Auckland books.’ Nan McDonald thought it a stronger book, on the whole, than some of the others. ‘Her reflections on life and Death, God and her own being, grow wearisome at times, but have moments of brilliance and profundity.’ Beatrice Davis wrote on an internal memo: ‘This may or may not surprise you. We turned down a further novel of Eve Langley’s.’

In August 1963, a single letter from Davis advised Langley of a £40 cheque for a 12-month option on the dramatic and radio rights of The Pea Pickers. She did not seek her permission this time. ‘I often think of you and wonder how you are.’ In May 1964, Davis sought a quote for a reprint of The Pea Pickers. It received Commonwealth Literary Funding for its production, and a reprint was ordered in March 1965. (The book was finally published in February 1966.) Langley journeyed

13 MSS 523. 7 April 1961.  
15 MSS 527. 21 April 1961.  
16 MSS 533. 2 May 1961.  
17 MSS [no number]. 29 September 1962.  
19 MSS 539. n.d.  
20 MSS 543. 14 August 1963.  
21 MSS 545. 29 May 1964.  
22 MSS 561. 8 December 1964  
to Panlooks for the hop-picking season, presumably in March, and decided she must ‘write plainly, your next adventure’. In August 1964, Davis asked Langley about the £40 cheque, which had not been cashed, suggesting they make a direct deposit for her. ‘Which bank is it, dear?’ Langley was thrilled to hear from Davis and delighted at the prospect of £40 (she assured Davis she hadn’t received it) ‘as it would fit in with a plan I am working on at present. Something utterly new, for me, although they truly say there is nothing new under the sun.’ The money was sorted out, and in October, Langley revealed to Davis her plan: she had booked a passage to Greece. She mused on the possibility of getting a ‘small pension in the Helens, I might be able to stay there and write as usual’. Shortly after, Langley wrote again, expressing her concern about the tattered state of her manuscripts and wanting to purchase a duplicator. Davis responded astutely on 17 November 1964, suggesting that as a duplicator was likely to be very expensive, she might think of retyping them herself, ‘perhaps revising as you go along to make a final copy nearer to your aim at perfection.’ Davis listed the manuscripts currently with Angus & Robertson, ‘and which I pray we shall soon be able to publish at least part of...’ She encouraged Langley to type on white paper using double spacing. She thought it ‘a lovely dream’ to live in Greece, but doubted that the ‘Hellenes would have money to give you for sustenance’.

‘Portrait of the Artist’ was sent to Davis on 14 April 1965. It was based on her journal of 1940-41, (including lengthy quotations but also more retrospective sections) ‘and is good’, written in years of war. I wish you could spare time to read it. But if you just store it away, I’ll be grateful. Davis assured her on 20 April 1965 that she would make time to read the book, ‘and so shall Nan. I do pray that this is something we can publish without the difficulties that your other manuscripts have raised. We really do want to do another Eve Langley book.’ ‘Portrait of the Artist’ was Langley’s sequel to ‘Remote, Apart’ and it suffered a similar fate. McDonald again flagged the possibility of ‘one good book being extracted from several of the MSS in a similar setting.’ Langley wrote again on 30 April 1965 about ‘Portrait of the Artist’ and told Davis that despite her advice about the chances of a pension, she was going to try her luck in Greece and was sailing in August 1965. In July 1965, perhaps while sorting out her things to go to Europe, Langley came across a collection...

25 MSS 547. 14 August 1964. See also MSS 625. 5 August 1964.
26 MSS 549. 19 August 1964.
27 MSS 551. 31 August 1964. MSS 553. n.d.
28 MSS 555. 28 October 1964.
29 MSS [no number]. n.d.
30 MSS 557. 17 November 1964
31 MSS 571. 14 April 1965.
32 MSS 567. 30 April 1965.
33 MSS 571. 14 April 1965.
34 MSS 579. 30 April 1965.
36 MSS 567. 30 April 1965.
of poems written by Dr Reg Dudding during the war, and given to her at that time. ('He was such a lovable, willing doctor, and we all loved him so.') She sent them off to Davis, and asked her to 'keep them and appreciate him'. Davis thanked her politely, briefly, adding 'we shall keep them as you ask'. This was the final letter from Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley on the Angus & Robertson file, a most inauspicious ending to more than 25 years of correspondence.

Langley had booked a berth on the Patris, a Chandris Lines ship, to sail for Piraeus, Greece on 2 August 1965, but her trip was not a success. She was home again at the Blue Mountains by 17 December 1965, having departed Greece aboard the Patris on November 20, after less than five months on a trip that was fraught with difficulty. By her own admission, she was ill prepared for the journey. She did not book a return passage, and had no money to pay for one. She took with her an extraordinary amount of luggage, and it was always going to be impossible for her to travel thus encumbered. She had with her a huge case stuffed with manuscripts, 'all trussed up', (including the valuable stuffed red cushion that June Langley had so reluctantly given up in 1952); 'big suitcases' with her clothes; her Remington typewriter; a hamper, stroller, haversacks, duffle bag, golf clubs, her brown coat and her fur coat, and a collection of dolls. There were apparently also hampers of crockery, a military kit and a World War II helmet. It defies the imagination how she even managed to get on board the boat in the first place. To make matters much worse, Langley fell very ill immediately on her arrival in Greece; she had no resources to call on — either financial or personal contacts, and this made things very difficult for her. Later, she wrote copiously of this trip, filling writing pads with versions (all remarkably similar) of her experiences. While some were written in

37 MSS 575. 8 July 1965.
38 MSS 585. 16 July 1965.
39 'I arrived back from Piraeus, Greece on the 17th of Dec. 1965, per Patris. I got the fever in Athens and couldn't go grape picking. But I saw the Acropolis and I had a camel ride at the Great Pyramid and saw the sphinx, and at Colombo in Ceylon I had dinner at Mt Lavinia Hotel. So, I have been to Europe, but I love Australia best!' Langley, Eve. 8 February 1966. Eve Langley Papers. Mitchell Library: Sydney. ML MSS 4188 (2) Item 4.
42 'Still packing – a suitcase...I...explain some valuable MSS will go into it, that is the red cushion...’ Langley, Eve. Diary, Greece. November 19 1965. p. 133. Eve Langley Papers. Mitchell Library: Sydney. ML MSS 4188 (2) Item 5.
44 Ibid.
46 'I got the plague, the dreadful fever as soon as I got to Greece and went to the Australian Embassy in Athens and they had to put me into hospital. I was there very ill...’ Langley, Eve. Letter to June Langley. 3 November 1965. June Langley Papers. Mitchell Library: Sydney. MSS 3898/1.
47 Langley describes: people, what they wear; what she wears; the sea; the ship; the cabin; the sky; the weather; all the time, interspersed with how she is feeling; what she eats; the tooth brush racks in the
1966 a great deal was also reworked in 1972, accompanied by petite watercolour sketches. It was during this latter collection of writings that Langley described the disastrous Piraeus affair with definition and candour:

Book 1 starting out from Australia

Tuesday 1st of August 1965.

I was all packed, ready for Greece, but hating to leave home. Snow had masked the trees. Frost gripped the ground. I, with all my manuscript and Remington, sorrowfully was setting sail for Greece. To get a pension there and Greek citizenship and a hut around Athens. See what actually lay ahead homelessness in Greece and an inability to manage Greek drachmae, and the Arab fever I got in Beirut, and the Australian embassy keeping me and the - Hospital and Agroi Nicoli and the - Refugee home for Armenians billeting me, and the Vice Consul getting me on board for Patris for Australia on Nov 20. I want to do that again in a hurry. Embark for Greece without a return ticket or enough money to keep me at a hotel for a month!

I really thought I was returning to ancient Greece, 3,000 years ago, walk into Athens, sleep in the grass, drink from the creek, buy a melon for a lepta or for less. Food lying everywhere, olives, nuts, oranges and grapes and apples and fruit picking on all sides in August. And if you were a writer or poet, the old Treasury would cough up and give you a few drachmae...to live on, and a job grape picking outside of Athens. Woe is me! This modern age is hell! But they helped me and I got back to the Australian bush, which is of course, all there is that's left of Ancient Greece. So this time 1965, I'd only a few hours to go before I left... Still, I'm glad I went. I didn't really know what Athens or Piraeus looked like, only the road into Athens I remembered well. Flat, no houses, patches of thin green grass. Yellow earth and armed [soldiers?] who marched with flashing spears and shields...

On 22 September 1965, Beatrice Davis sent an internal memo to several staff advising them of Langley's situation: 'We have had a letter from the Ambassador to Greece, His Excellency Mr H. B. Gullett, about Eve Langley who, having arrived in Athens, is penniless.' The date of this memo would suggest that probably only between one and two weeks elapsed after her arrival in Greece, before Langley was forced to seek help. Davis approved the payment of a cheque to the value of £50 to cabin of someone else; what others are doing; what she is doing; with whom and when; what she sees, feels; imagines; a list of costumes for the ship's fancy dress ball - age and sex of participants; how they danced; who they spoke to; what they said; dates; times; other boats, other lands, and always the sea, the sea in its changing moods and colours and how it stands in relation to the boat; and later, railway stations, myths, flowers and animals - when she bought her ink, and where - for it is all in blue ink; the produce sold by shop keepers; what she eats, where she stays; the colours of the doors and the effects of light on all things; coffee, cake; beds; warmth or cold; churches. 'A message from June, a cable 'wonderful letter. With you. June' from Katoomba. I was glad.' The sounds of bells; buying paper and envelopes; poems remembered about places; Instanbul: 'the first I knew of Instanbul was in 1932...'; clouds; memories; preoccupied with dates and days...For example, see Langley, Eve. [Diary of Greece.] Eve Langley Papers. Mitchell Library: Sydney. ML MSS 4188 (2) Item 5.

Thwaite, Joy. op. cit. p. 466.

Langley, Eve. 'Agio Nicoloii, the Real Book One.' op. cit.

MSS 593. 22 September 1965.

For the return trip, she left on 20 November and was back at Katoomba on 16 December, just under a month. Assuming, say, a three week trip over, (leaving on 2 August) and a week for the ambassador's letter to arrive (on 22 September), this suggests a period of around a fortnight during which Langley was essentially on her own.
be sent to Langley (‘or Mr Gullet’) ‘against the royalties on a forth-coming reprint of *The Pea Pickers*. Douglas Stewart, who had joined Angus & Robertson in 1960 as an ‘editorial assistant’, and had known Langley from her early New Zealand days, took on the task of trying to organise some Commonwealth Literary Funding to assist her. On 20 September, Stewart wrote to the secretary of the Fund to see what could be arranged, and then to the Ambassador in Greece, to ask ‘what sort of help would be most useful…a pension, perhaps for just a few months…money for repatriation? A simple grant of a few pounds?’ He added a personal appeal that reflected the deep empathy he had for Langley and her predicament.

Eve has had a Thing about Greece all her life; it is— or ancient Greece is — her Promised Land; and for that reason, if she hasn’t gone right off the deep end, we’d love to have her see something of the country before she comes home. In very odd clothes, and with odd enough behaviour, she nevertheless has managed in recent years to get herself back to Australia from New Zealand, to live alone in a shack in the Blue Mountains somewhere, and to go pea-picking again in Gippsland. Would it be possible to let her wander off into Greece for a while, with a small grant, on the understanding that she would keep in touch with the Embassy? Or is she too bad for that?*

The Commonwealth Literary Fund cabled the Ambassador, explaining their proposal to repatriate Langley (she was mortified at the thought, despite her desperation at this stage to return home*), and Stewart wrote to him on 12 October ‘to recapitulate and explain what you already know’. Langley had some money in her bank account (£50), and the manager at the Katoomba Branch had said he would allow her to draw an advance of another £100. She needed to organise this through an appropriate bank in Greece. In addition, Stewart secured another £100 through the Commonwealth Literary Fund.

Everything was sorted out for Langley; she boarded the *Pains* on 20 November 1965 and was back home by the 16 December. Inexplicably (perhaps she was too exhausted, perhaps too mortified and embarrassed), Langley did not contact Stewart or anyone at Angus and Robertson following her return. Stewart wrote to her on 4 February 1966 asking how she was, ‘Did you get back safely? I was hoping that you might be able to call in when you got to Sydney.’, and offering to get more assistance from the Commonwealth Literary Fund if this was needed. He also said he would be sending her a copy of the new edition of *The Pea Pickers*, which was to be published on 24 February. ‘Beatrice sends her congratulations and best wishes. As do I.’ Three copies were duly sent to Langley on 23 February.* Langley was very pleased with the books and replied on March 25: ‘You must know how greatly I love it and turn to

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52 MSS 595. 27 September 1965.
53 MSS 597. 29 September 1965.
54 ‘I went back to see Mr Gibson and be assured by him that he would write to the Repat Dept in Canberra at once and get me ‘repatriated!’ ‘Repatriated!’ I said in horror. It was not true. Why on earth had I not bought a return ticket? I was stunned and left, with a few things, overnight bag and satchel.’ Langley, Eve. Diary entry. August 31 1965. Eve Langley Papers. Mitchell Library: Sydney. ML MSS 4188 (2) Item 6.
55 MSS 601. 12 October 1965.
56 MSS 603. 12 October 1965.
57 MSS 605. 4 February 1966.
58 MSS 609. 23 February 1966.
read it often at night in the bush. Thanks again to both you and Beatrice. Yet she was disappointed that Stewart had not advised her of funding to cover the cost of locating luggage which she had left behind in Greece. ‘You helped me when I was ill in Greece so I thought I could count on you for help in this instance. Stewart wrote to the Ambassador, and advised Langley to seek assistance directly through the Commonwealth Literary Fund. Langley’s thanks for the financial assistance she had received while stranded in Greece came rather late, in November 1966. It was almost an afterthought, as she wrote an appreciative note for the latest in royalties for *The Pea Pickers* – $85. This letter was addressed to no one in particular, just ‘Dear Sirs’. There were no letters exchanged between Langley and her publisher in 1967. Langley was at Crossover in March 1967, then hop picking at Panlooks, and was writing copiously. Of her time at Panlooks in 1967, for example, she wrote around 200,000 words.

In March 1968, Langley was again at Crossover and Panlooks, and in June, wrote to the ‘Sirs’ of Angus & Robertson, thanking them for the year’s royalties from *The Pea Pickers*. She said that Mrs William Panlook had told her that *The Pea Pickers* was now in use in all Victorian Secondary schools and colleges. In 1968, she met with her son, Langley, and her daughter, Bisi. There is a photo of Langley that her son, Langley Clarke took on 3 August 1968 a somewhat softer, more composed image. In October 1968, Langley travelled to New Zealand to spend some time with Bisi and her young family, not returning until nearly a year later, in July 1969.

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60 ‘The driver and Steve dragged my luggage out - Gods, there was the manuscript suitcase, all trussed up and the wire hanging loosely from it. Did it open? Did I see the top sack all flat as though much of the manuscript had gone? I don't remember really. But I was so grateful to see it, even! Yes! And the big suitcases with my clothes and possibly, I said, Miss Mog locked in it! "But Steve!" I cried "Where is my Remington typewriter. A Remington standard 10. And the hamper? Golf clubs, the haversacks and stroller? Or my brown coat and my fur coat. And my duffle bag?" Langley, Eve. Diary Account of trip to Greece 25 October 1965 - 13 November 1965 (w/c dated 1972). op. cit.
62 MSS 611. 6 April 1966.
63 MSS 613. 3 November 1966.
64 For example: ML MSS 4188 (3) Items 6-7: Diaries Hop picking at Panlooks. 1967. Exercise book 27 pages written both sides, 22 lines, 10 words/line (11,888 words). Hop picking at Panlooks 1967: Exercise book 128 pages, c. half both sides 23 lines/page, 10 words/line (46,460 words).
MSS 4188 (3) Item 8. Hop picking at Panlooks 1967. A4 writing pad both sides 64 pages, 10 words/line, 25 lines/page (32,000).
MSS 4188 (3) Item 9. Hop picking at Panlooks 1967 A4 writing book both 100 pages sides, 11 words/line (52,800 words).
MSS 4188 (3) Item 10. Diary Hop picking at Panlooks 1967. A4 writing book 100 pages one side, 26 lines/page, 11 words/line (28,600 words)
65 MSS 621. 6 June 1968.
68 MSS 615. 20 July 1969.
Despite the earnest hopes of Beatrice Davis, Langley's manuscripts remained unpublished. Although _White Topee_ was rarely mentioned, _The Pea Pickers_ continued to 'live'. In March 1973, after 37 years with Angus & Robertson, Beatrice Davis, (along with Nan McDonald, who had been with Angus & Robertson for 30 years, and Elisabeth Hughes, 27 years and John Tranter) was given her notice. The headlines said it all: ‘Heads roll at A & R.’ Douglas Stewart, who was nearing sixty, resigned within the month. Nan McDonald died from cancer within the year. After a brief sojourn in Paris, Davis was snapped up by Thomas Nelson to become their editor for New South Wales. ‘A new job is an exciting challenge...It is amazing how many of my old authors still want me to edit their books. I just cannot let them down,’ she said. The writer Colin Simpson arranged a tribute in the form of testimonials that were written by 82 writers she had assisted. Beatrice Davis died in May 1992.

When Davis left Angus & Robertson, Langley had not corresponded with her for more than eight years. Davis had vague intentions of visiting Langley at Katoomba, but never got around to it. Langley died in June 1974 a year after Beatrice Davis was sacked from Angus & Robertson. In 1973, alone in her bush hut, in a reflective moment, Langley penned a line to herself: ‘Eve – tins, bottles, dirt – a dejected parrot, an invisible tortoise – an unwilling fire, and happily – enough – in the midst the old immutable unchangeable Steve.’

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69 Elizabeth Hughes 'was a splendid editor – in sorting out practical details and presenting things with detail – scientific and botanical material'. Davis, Beatrice. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. 19 May 1977. TRC 527 ANL.
71 Barker, Anthony. op. cit. p. 38.
73 Barker, Anthony. op. cit. p. 39.
75 A copy of the collection is in Simpson’s papers at the Mitchell Library. See also Obituary. _The Sydney Morning Herald_. 26 May 1992. p. 6.
76 Ibid.
Conclusion

In June 1974, Meg Stewart (who had met Eve Langley many years before), set out to visit the writer with the intention of making a film. Arriving at Langley's house in Katoomba, Meg found that all was quiet and still: she entered an eerie dwelling littered with parcels of nothing and writing on everything. The only clear space was on the floor of the hut, where the body of Eve Langley had lain undisturbed for days—perhaps weeks. Thwarted in her desire to interview the author herself, Meg Stewart chose instead to film June Langley, and to do it in Langley's own house. The result was a short film titled She's My Sister (1975).

Meg Stewart donated the papers retrieved from Langley's hut to the Mitchell Library in 1975 as a 'gift', with the proviso that the children of Langley could claim them if they wanted to. There were also other papers found by the police (an exercise book of poems written in 1973) and handed to the Public Trustee of New South Wales (who administered Langley's estate), and held in trust by the Library. Complicated negotiations with the Public Trustee followed, and responsibility for the papers was eventually returned to the beneficiaries. Langley's children gave the Mitchell Library permission to incorporate the papers into the Library's collection as a donation in 1983. 1

The challenge of wading through Langley's papers is a significant one. As well as the collection of her private papers, there are other letters and documents scattered throughout other sources, such as the June Langley papers, and the Stewart family papers. The Mitchell Library purchased the Angus & Robertson/Eve Langley papers—which included the letters and submitted manuscripts used in this thesis—in 1977, as part of a huge consignment of material that covered the period 1933 to the mid-1970s.

This thesis focuses on the professional aspects of Eve Langley's literary endeavours, and tracks her relationship with her editors Beatrice Davis and Nan McDonald. No one has looked closely at the Angus & Robertson correspondence before, yet it contains the most precise and information-rich record available of Langley's commentary on her writing for publication. Of particular significance is the detailed account of the editorial process applied to Langley's second book White Topee. Beatrice Davis and Nan McDonald had great faith in Langley, and ensured that her manuscripts and letters were preserved. In their letters to the author they maintained a focus on professional matters, while creating a space wherein Langley could comfortably communicate her aspirations and achievements, and the more day-to-day aspects of her life. Langley deliberately cultivated a professional dialogue with her editors, but at the same time, she was candid about what she was doing and the unique lustre of her personality is apparent. At times she appeared more compliant than she actually felt, but this is not an unusual quality in a professional relationship. These letters have a special place and purpose in understanding Eve Langley's life and work. Along with other examples of her correspondence, they provide the most transparent evidence we are likely to get of Langley's thoughts and actions.

We know quite a lot about Beatrice Davis, who held an illustrious position in the publishing world and was revered by her stable of prominent Australian authors. She nurtured Langley’s creativity, and seemed to understand the way she thought about things and expressed her ideas. Less is known of the more reserved and retiring Nan McDonald, but her calm assurance and the sensitive application of her intelligence are apparent in every letter she wrote to Langley in the five years from 1952 - 1957. Both Davis and McDonald always maintained their optimism that something would eventually be salvaged from the vast collection of Langley’s manuscripts accumulated at Angus & Robertson. McDonald was of the view that her work could be successfully integrated into a collection, given the time and resources. Davis’s expectations were tempered by pragmatism. As the years passed, her initial intense excitement at discovering a major new talent with The Pea Pickers, and the possibility that this may be replicated in future work, was replaced with acceptance that this was increasingly unlikely. Davis retained a sense of responsibility however for the author’s well being that motivated her to ensure that Langley was provided for; wherever possible, she used her position and influence to secure opportunities for Langley. Perhaps the only criticism that can be levelled at Davis was her willingness to be drawn into an intimate dialogue with June Langley during 1949-1950, although it seems that she withdrew as June attempted to displace Langley as the focus of their relationship. Neither Beatrice Davis nor Nan McDonald revealed much about themselves in their correspondence: their letters focussed on Langley — on what she was writing and what she was doing. Langley seemed quite comfortable with this, and did not inquire about personal aspects of the lives of her editors, although she obviously felt and expressed a sense of deep friendship, particularly after meeting them in 1956.

This thesis has largely confined itself to the professional side of Langley’s writing; in doing so it fills in the gaps of what has been known and understood of her in the past. Significantly, it dispels the myth that Langley could not cope with editing, and that is why her manuscripts remained unpublished. In fact, Langley would have preferred her editors to take control of the editorial process, because she found it tedious, and was inclined to ignore her own important role in the preparation of her manuscripts. It was this aspect of the editorial relationship that her editors found most challenging. They wanted her to take more responsibility for presenting her work in a disciplined and organised fashion. Langley’s reluctance to do this placed an unacceptable burden on the increasingly strained resources at Angus & Robertson.

Langley seemed to have a fairly simplistic notion of editing, as a process of chopping and cutting and excising, rather than refining. Faced with having to copy out ‘Bancroft House’ at Nan McDonald’s insistence, Langley saw it as a chore, rather than an opportunity to improve her manuscript. ‘My creative self is too strong for my labouring self, and copying is a task I sometimes abhor, yet sometimes love...I love writing the first draft of the book. Ah, what joy, what cups of tea, what glory, what peaceful hours...But when it comes to copying the same...this although, in itself, but a duplicate of the work of genius, is not, my dove such a pleasant task as that of
Langley was inclined to view her writing as the product of genius, and having committed herself to particular ideas, she often found it hard to part with them. Her preoccupations with the British Empire, Greek mythology and Oscar Wilde are obvious examples. She treated words as an expendable, renewable commodity, endlessly available to service the needs of her inspiration. The result was a highly uneven and voluminous outpouring of writing, and its consumption challenging for the most ardent Langley devotee.

Quantifying and analysing the Langley documents recovered from her house after her death is an enormous task in itself, and not attempted here, although the letters and documents are used to supplement the information contained in the Angus & Robertson file. The sheer volume, illegibility and repetitious content of much of Langley's material is daunting, yet each page in itself often contains much that is beautiful – prose and poetry intermingled as in the best of her published work. She described people and incidents and conversations and landscapes endlessly and evocatively. It appears as if no part of her outward life escaped scrutiny and reportage. The paradox is that she remains so elusive and obscure despite – or perhaps because – of her efforts.

Langley has left so much writing that is open to interpretation, that her life has become synonymous with her fiction. Part of the purpose of this thesis has been to separate out these blurred boundaries between the writing for publication, and the person. By establishing an orderly chronology of Langley’s life after 1949, the author becomes more accessible and seems less complicated. Her connections with every day life – maintaining a day job, while writing at night; moving house, moving country; her relationships with other writers and professional people have an ordinary ring about them. This chronology shifts the emphasis from the more ‘eccentric’ aspects of her life that have, in the past, attracted the greatest attention – her cross dressing; her preoccupations with time, space and history; her highly individual way of looking at the world, and writing about her literary ‘self’. By contrast, the chaotic effect of her biography The Importance of Being Eve Langley feeds the more speculative, exotic mythology that has hitherto been created about Langley’s life and work. Many of Joy Thwaite’s assertions and ‘facts’ are clearly wrong and without substance. In addition, she relied heavily on retrospective anecdotal memories of people who clearly had their own agenda – Langley’s husband, Hilary Clark, her lover Roger Mellsop and sister June are an obvious few. This is not to discount the importance of interviewing friends, relations and acquaintances, but their comments need to be balanced with other evidence, which in Langley’s case is readily accessible.

One of the important findings of this thesis is the extraordinary dichotomy between Thwaite’s conclusions and my own interpretation. Thwaite primarily analysed Langley’s writings and journals, and interviewed old acquaintances, and used them as a basis for her argument, while I studied the contemporary evidence. Thwaite used the Angus & Robertson letters when they supported her contentions, but in a highly

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selective way that does not accurately reflect the context or the meaning of the letters. Other writers have drawn on the first heavily cut letter that Thwaite used to open her biography, for example, without looking closely at the other contemporary evidence. Similarly, Hal Porter has been cited frequently as a reference point in determining Langley’s ability to separate reality from fantasy. Yet he declares himself an unreliable witness, who blends reality and fiction to fulfil his own artistic agenda.

There is a strong argument here for maintaining a vigilant eye on primary source material. Contemporary evidence has a compelling veracity, and this should be the starting point for providing a framework of analysis of Langley and her work. Langley has suffered from a psychoanalytic reading of her life and fiction. The argument that Langley lost her sense of self does not hold when viewed in the context of contemporary documents. There is no evidence at all that Langley ‘believed’ herself to be Oscar Wilde, although she probably identified with the persecution of the artist who dared to be different. Following her release from hospital in 1949, Langley showed all the signs of integrating normally back into a regular life. She acquired property, worked in the Auckland Public Library, wrote at night and at weekends, took holidays.... But she did become increasingly isolated, particularly following the termination of her employment at the Auckland Public Library, and this is reflected in her manuscripts, which are often very introspective, but not so much in her correspondence.

Her letters had a clear sense of audience and purpose, and Langley did not, on the whole, deliberately obfuscate her language, although she often dwelt on ‘fantastic’ themes, and at other times found it difficult to explain her meanings. But the intent was there to communicate with an appropriate level of transparency. This seems to be different to her more personal dealings with people, where she apparently was inclined to put up a ‘front’ – deliberately startling with odd clothes and mannerisms, a habit that people found quite disconcerting. Similarly, in her creative writing – whether for a book, or when rewriting her diaries – she put barriers around her ‘self’ by virtue of the sheer volume she produced. These barriers she set up were – and are – very effective in ensuring we do not get too close to her.

There are several significant gaps in the seemingly endless chronicle of Langley’s life, represented by the absence of reference to Langley’s relationship with her children, and her years spent in the Mental Hospital between 1942-1949. There is no question that she was deeply and irreparably traumatised by her isolation from her children during these and subsequent years, the deprivation of her liberty, her prolonged exposure to extremely painful and unpleasant ‘treatment’ and the lifelong stigma of mental illness. She could neither talk about it nor write about it. But her letters, particularly to her daughter, Bisi, (were they to be made available) would no doubt reveal a great deal about how she saw herself as a mother, and who she was in relation to her children. It is the letters that will provide these insights, however, not her journals or her books.

While the focus of this thesis has been the professional relationship Langley enjoyed with her editors, the correspondence between Beatrice Davis and Langley’s sister June in the late fifties and early sixties introduced an extraordinary element of
obfuscation into the biographical detail of Langley’s life. That the relationship was far
more complex than Langley appreciated is evident in the place June created for
herself in the Angus & Robertson file. June, who finally got to sit in her sister’s chair
(literally, for the documentary She’s my Sister was filmed in Langley’s cottage)
attempted, not for the first time, to rewrite Langley’s life, with herself in the starring
role. The film captured the peculiar character of June, in a rambling monologue about
herself and Langley and their mother.

For Langley, June was muse, confidant and audience: she shared her past and her
adventures, and featured in her writing. Langley seemed to feel that June truly
understood her: ‘I know you forgive me my tangled phrases. Half the time there isn’t
any sense in them. Can you explain it? But nevertheless, my gratitude is sincere: I
have never roused enthusiasm that satisfied me unless it has been through you – If I
can always be sure of you as that so necessary light on my pictures that I hang on the
wall of years I shall be very happy...I would crush the army of adversity and
misfortune.’3 They wrote to each other consistently throughout their lives, sometimes
weekly, sometimes, it would seem, almost daily: ‘Dear Juno’ Langley wrote in
August 1965: ‘I have not written for a day or 2’.4 Their relationship however would
appear to have been a highly volatile one. Langley shared her thoughts with her sister
quite freely, and there is no evidence of any ill feeling on her part, although Ruth Park
recalled that they were often at ‘outs’ with each other.5 June Langley on the other
hand expressed a great deal of anger towards Langley, with the evidence dating from
that first letter to Beatrice Davis in May 1950.6 This anger seems to have had its roots
in jealousy, and maintained its intensity long after Langley had died. Langley’s son,
Karl Marx, told Ruth Park that he had visited June in a Katoomba hospital and she
was, even then, ‘inordinately angry’ because Langley had left the care of Mia ‘entirely
to her’.7 June thought herself a genius too, whose success had been sacrificed on the
altar of Langley’s talent.

When Meg Stewart filmed June for She’s my Sister, she found her ‘strange and
intimidating’.8 June thought herself ‘a very shy person...so hurt to be snubbed – not
that I care a dam about anyone’. Eve, she said, ‘was always writing...she had a great
gift of writing... I can’t bear to think of her dead’. Her mother, for whom she had
done so much was, she said, ‘very fond of my sister. I was an outsider’.9

A hitherto unreported aspect of June Langley’s intervention in Langley’s life is the
fact that she explored the option of Langley undergoing a frontal lobotomy just
months before she was released from hospital. In June Langley’s file at the Mitchell
Library is a letter from the eminent brain surgeon Dr Hugh Cairns written in July 7

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6 MSS 107. 8 May 1950.
8 Stewart, Meg. Interview with author. 5 November 1999.
1948. June had asked him to see Langley (he was unable to do so because he was about to travel to London, where, as it turned out, he died just under 13 days later), and had raised the possibility of the operation with him. He wrote: ‘The question at issue would be whether the operation of frontal lobotomy would help your sister, and the difficult part of the question would be the decision whether to operate. This is a problem for an expert psychiatrist: it is not a question on which I am able to give an expert opinion myself.’ He added, with chilling simplicity: ‘The actual operation is surgically a straight forward and standardized procedure which Mr McKenzie does as well as I do.’ This letter has the salutation carefully snipped from it. Had she been successful in her endeavours, June might have had no need to blight Langley’s future by writing so purposefully and damagingly to Davis, and intervening in her professional relationship with her editor. June’s relationship with her sister was one of great significance: she was an absolutely crucial, central part of Langley’s life, and her role is yet to be fully explored.

Langley’s relationship with her sister is just one of many possible avenues for further research. The chronological narrative of this thesis provides a framework for further discussion of Langley’s life and work. She was, and remains, a fascinating creature whose work Beatrice Davis compared with some of the most respected writers in Australian literature, such as Christina Stead and Patrick White.\(^{10}\) Langley was an inspired and gifted writer with a unique imagination, who dealt stoically with great misfortune, a dedicated individual who sacrificed a great deal for her art. Although there were many people who thought very highly of her, Langley felt essentially alone, and always envisaged dying that way. ‘I lay smiling in the deep dry grass. “Tonight I may die”. Remembering glint of sun, of stone and... hollows: fox frequented. The grey post... green wreaths of passion vine and... blue, the golden beetles flew.’\(^{11}\)

\(^{10}\) Davis, Beatrice. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. 19 May 1977. TRC 527 ANL.

Selected bibliography

BOOKS


ARTICLES


**INTERVIEWS**

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Davis, Beatrice. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. 19 May 1977. TRC 527 ANL.

Dobson, Rosemary. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. 1975. TRC 327 ANL.

Herbert, Xavier. Interview with Hazel de Berg. 12 July 1961. ANL.


Langley, Eve. Interview with Hazel de Berg. 9 May 1964. ANL.


Smith, Arthur G. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. 11 September 1973. TRC 221. ANL.


Stewart, Douglas. Interview with Suzanne Lunney. 21 March 1975. TRC 336 ANL

Stewart, Meg. Interview with author. 5 November 1999.

**FILM**


**LETTERS**


Langley, Eve. ‘Diary Account of Trip to Greece’ (7 October 1965-17 October 1965.) Mitchell Library: Sydney. MSS 4188 (3) Item 2


Langley, Eve. Letter to June. 14 November 1956. c/- Countess de Wilme – Hautemont, 33, Wharf Rodd, Snails Bay, Sydney NSW. MSS 3898 (1(2)).


CATALOGUE

MANUSCRIPTS


Stewart family. Photographs. PXA 775.


DRAWING
Appendix 1

Manuscripts 1941-51

MSS 65
W.G. Cousins, Angus & Robertson Ltd to Eve Langley
24 October 1941

Dear Miss Langley,
Enclosed is agreement form in duplicate for THE PEA PICKERS. Will you please sign both copies, retain one and return one to us.
Your book is being set and I have announced its publication to the trade. The story is a very fine piece of work and we are proud to publish it.
Yours faithfully,

MSS 67
District Public Trustee, Public Trust Office to the Manager, Angus & Robertson Ltd
18 December 1942

Dear Sir,
ESTATE OF EVE MARIA CLARK
As is evidenced by the enclosed certificate, the Public Trustee is attending to the affairs of the above-named during her illness.
Mrs. Clark under her maiden name of Eve Laingley, [sic] was the authoress of the book “The Pea Pickers”, and your letter of the 4th September last has been handed to this Office.
Please note your records to forward cheques for future royalties to me until further advised. No doubt you will advise periodically the position regarding sales of this book. When acknowledging receipt of this notification, please indicate if there are any other publications from which Mrs. Clark draws royalties.
Owing to the international situation, a copy of this letter will be forwarded by an early mail.
Yours faithfully,
P.S. Please forward one copy of “The Pea Pickers” addressed to Mrs. E. M. Clark, G.P.O. Box 2204, Auckland, New Zealand.

MSS 69
Public Trustee
Certification of admission to Auckland Mental Hospital 14 August, 1942.

MSS 71
W. G. Cousins, Angus & Robertson Ltd to The Public Trust Office
18 January 1943

Dear Sirs:
We have your letter of 18th December and enclose copy of our last royalty statement sent to Miss Eve Langley. This cleaned up the first edition of “The Pea Pickers” but we have ordered from the printers another printing but it may be some months before this second printing is ready. We have made a note to pay your office any further royalties that may accrue.
We know of no other publication from which Mrs Clark draws royalties, and feel sure that “The Pea Pickers” is the only book she has written.
A copy of “The Pea Pickers” is being sent to Mrs Clark by this mail. This is the only one we have in stock and we are not making any charge for this copy.
Yours faithfully,
MSS 73
ANGUS & ROBERTSON LTD to The Public Trustee
11 August 1943

Dear Sirs,

Re EVE LANGLEY

Enclosed is royalty statement and cheque for £651318 on account of THE PEA PICKERS by Eve Langley. Will you please have the attached receipt signed and returned to us as soon as possible?

Yours faithfully,

MSS 75
W.G.Cousins to The Public Trust Office 147 Albert Street, Auckland
2 March 1944

Dear Sirs:

We have received advice from our New York literary agents to whom we sent a copy of THE PEA PICKERS to the effect that they have an offer from the New York publishers, E.P. Dutton & Co. as follows:-

A payment of $250 in advance against royalties on signing the agreement and a further payment of $500 on publication date, also against royalties. 10% royalty will be paid up to 5000 copies, 12½ % to 5000-10,000 copies and 15% thereafter. The publishers would want 20% commission on film rights if sold, and 10% on radio dramatic rights. The book would be published sometime in 1945 and the publishers want an option on the author’s next three books.

Will you please telegraph whether we should accept the offer so that we can cable our agent. Our New York agent has been trying to sell this book to a number of publishers and this is the only bid that has been received. The offer is a fair one and if the decision was our business we would cable “accept”.

Yours faithfully,

MSS 77
Public Trust Office, Auckland to The Manager Angus & Robertson Ltd
10 March 1944

Dear Sir

Re EVE LANGLEY.

ESTATE OF EVE MARIA CLARK.

I confirm my cablegram reading as follows, in response to your letter of the 2nd instant:-

“Eve Langley. Dutton & Co. offer acceptance approved provided no infringement existing contract.”

Mrs. Clark was very pleased with the offer, and directed that it be accepted.

In the absence of any information regarding the contract already entered into by Mrs. Clark, you will appreciate that I felt diffident about giving an unqualified acceptance, although I felt sure that you would be apprised of the legal position and would not recommend Mrs. Clark to enter into a contract that would conflict with her existing one.

It will be appreciated if you will at your earliest convenience supply me with particulars of the earlier contract with your own firm, and in due course give additional particulars of the contract in America, stating the commissions which are and will be chargeable against Mrs. Clark’s share of proceeds.

Yours faithfully,

MSS 79
Copy of 77, with addendum:

PS Owing to the international situation, have sent copy

MSS 81
W.G. Cousins to Public Trustee
10 March 1944

Dear Sir:

We have your cable of 9th accepting Dutton & Co’s offer for the American rights of Eve Langley’s PEA PICKERS, and have cabled our London agent to this effect.
If you should have any reason to communicate with us again by cable please note that the censorship authorities do not allow cable addresses. Your cable arrived with the enclosed attached to it.

Yours faithfully,

MSS 83
W.G. COUSINS to Public Trustee
17 March 1944

Dear Sir:
We have just received your letter of 10 March and enclose copy of our agreement with Eve Langley on account of THE PEA PICKERS.
When the contract with Dutton and Co. reaches us it will be forwarded to you for perusal before we sign it.
I think you can safely leave the matter in our hands. We have been dealing with many American agreements over the past twelve months.
Yours faithfully,

MSS 85
District Public Trustee to Angus & Robertson Ltd
24 March 1944

Dear Sirs,
Estate of Eve Maria Clark; re Eve Langley
I am in receipt of your letter of the 17th instant enclosing copy of agreement with the above named. Will you please advise when payment of the December Royalty will be made.
Yours faithfully,

MSS 87
District Public Trustee to Angus & Robertson
27 March 1944

Dear Sir,
Estate of Eve Maria Clark.
Re Eve Langley
I am in receipt of your letter of the 17th inst. Enclosing a copy of your agreement with Mrs Clark.
Will you please advise if it is intended to print any more copies of THE PEA PICKERS in Australia, or whether the only payments which will be made on Mrs. Clark's behalf in the future will be in connection with American sales.
Yours faithfully,

MSS 89
Public Trustee Office to Angus & Robertson
27 March 1944

Dear Sir,
Estate of Eve Maria Clark.
Re Eve Langley
I am in receipt of your letter of the 17th inst. Enclosing a copy of your agreement with Mrs Clark.
Will you please advise if it is intended to print any more copies of THE PEA PICKERS in Australia, or whether the only payments which will be made on Mrs. Clark's behalf in the future will be in connection with American sales.
Yours faithfully,

PS Owing to the international situation, the duplicate of this letter will be forwarded by the next mail.

MSS 91
W.G. Cousins to The District Public Trustee
6 April 1944

Dear Sir,
In a letter received from our New York literary agents, Leland Hayward, Inc., dated February 22, the following paragraph appears.

"I was particularly happy to be able to send you a cable to say that Dutton's want to publish Eve Langley's novel. This despite the fact that your reply to our cable of inquiry contained some bad news about Miss Langley's future work. Because they cannot get to the publication of the book until sometime in 1943 (sic) (this question of paper shortage), they did not want to put down too much of the advance on signing. Hence, the division of the monies $250.00 on signing, $500.00 on publication. The royalties are, I think, satisfactory, in view of the circumstances, that is 10% to 5000 copies, 12½% to 10,000, and 15% thereafter. I hope that Canada is available as the American publisher can cover that territory far more easily than the English publishers and I do think that Dutton's will be rather insistent upon that point. Dutton's is one house which demands participation in some of the subsidiary rights. I got them down to 20% on the film and radio rights and 10% on dramatic. They are hoping that Miss Langley will regain her health and get to writing again and so they are asking for an option on her next books on terms to be arranged. Dutton's (sic) are really frightfully keen about Miss Langley's work and want to know as much about her as they can. Will you send through whatever biographical data you have? Could we have a picture of Miss Langley?"

[MSS 93]

...We have written to our agents telling them that Dutton's can have the Canadian rights. This is usual with publishers in U.S.A.

We would very much like to know if you think Miss Langley will regain her health at some future date. Also could you get some biographical data about her, and a photograph of any sort? American publishers as a rule try to get from us biographical details of the authors they publish, also photographs,

Yours faithfully,

MSS 95
Angus & Robertson to Public Trustee
12 April 1944

Estate of Eve Maria Clark – Eve Langley

Dear Sir:

We have just received your letter of March 27.

We would like to print THE PEA PICKERS again, but unfortunately it is one amongst 100 titles we have to reprint and we are not sure whether we will have the paper to spare. The Commonwealth Government promised to help the publishers in Australia regarding paper, but so far not much has come forward. We are hoping that in the next few months some paper will be made available.

Yours faithfully,

MSS 97
W.G. Cousins to Public Trustee
5 May 1944

Re Eve Langley

Estate of Eve Maria Clark

Dear Sir:

We have just received one copy of the agreement for The PEA PICKERS by Eve Langley, from E.P. Dutton & Co., New York. This agreement is similar to other agreements we have had from time to time with other American publishers, and we would like you to sign it on behalf of Eve Langley and return it to us as quickly as possible. This copy has to be sent back to New York. Two other copies of the agreement will follow – one to be held by yourselves and the other to be returned to us. We will send them to you immediately they reach us from New York.

Yours faithfully,

MSS 99
W.G. Cousins to Public Trustee
14 June 1944

Re Eve Langley

Dear Sir:
Enclosed is the duplicate agreement for THE PEA PICKERS which has just reached us from Leland Hayward, Inc., New York. Will you please sign this copy and return it to us for our file.

You have not returned to us the first copy which we sent you some weeks ago. We would be glad to have this back so that we can send it to New York.

Yours faithfully,

MSS 101
Virginia Morris, Foreign Department Leland Hayward, Inc. to W.G. Cousins
21 January 1949

Dear Mr Cousins,

Eve Langley

In accordance with your recent request, we have been endeavouring to obtain three copies of Not Yet the Moon, which the Executors of the estate of Eve Langley would like to have. As soon as we receive these copies, you may be sure that they will be forwarded to you.

Kindest regards.

Most sincerely,

MSS 103
Angus & Robertson Ltd to Public Trustee
16 March 1949

Dear Sir:

Estate Eve Maria Clark (Eve Langley)

We have just received a letter from our New York agents, Leland Hayward, Inc., in which they say that they have at last obtained the three copies of NOT YET THE MOON by the above author and have despatched them under separate cover. As soon as the books reach us they will be forwarded to you.

Yours faithfully,

MSS 105
Angus & Robertson to Public Trustee
5 May 1949

Dear Sir:

Re Estate Eve Maria Clark (Eve Langley)

Some time ago you asked us to try and procure from America for you three copies of NOT YET THE MOON by Eve Langley. Our Agents have only just sent us the copies and we are sending them on to you today by ordinary mail. We shall be pleased to know that they reach you safely.

Yours faithfully,

MSS 107
Junior (June) Langley to Beatrice Davice, Editor, Angus & Robertson, Ltd, SYDNEY
8 May 1950

Dear Miss Davis,

I have received a copy of your letter from the Public Trust requesting some early biographical particulars of Eve Langley.

As you know my sister has been a patient in the Auckland Mental Hospital for almost seven years. I am very happy to say that she has now been discharged, relieved, after a period of 12 months probation in my care. Although she has not yet completely recovered this will come, I hope, in time.

This is but an outline but if I can be of further help I am at your service. Eve is in Auckland at present and as yet does not know about republication of Pea Pickers. I do wish she could go to Australia, I think it would be the beginning of a new life. Some day perhaps when her condition has improved.

Sincerely,

MSS 125
Beatrice Davis to Junior Langley
24 June 1950

Dear Miss Langley
It was good of you to write to me sending the particulars about Eve. I was happy to hear that she had been discharged from hospital and hope she will soon be fully recovered. Do you think she is sufficiently well for me to write to her? It would give me great pleasure to be in touch with her, but, of course, I do not wish to upset her or to impose any strain. I should merely write in a casual vein, telling her I was sorry she had been ill and speaking of the wide appreciation the Peapickers has received. It might please her, too, to know that we intend to republish it — though this may not be until next year.

There is a gap between the information you have given me about Eve and the publication of the Peapickers in (I think) 1941 or 1942. You did not say that her verse had appeared in New Zealand Best Poems (published by Marris) and in the New Zealand Mercury; nor that Douglas Stewart of the Sydney Bulletin had appreciated and published her verse which appeared also in our annual anthology Australian Poetry. You did not say anything of her marriage to Hilary Clark (when was this?) or of her children. And you did not say that she won the Prior Memorial Prize (presented by the Bulletin) in 1941. Is there nothing else you can tell me? Or do you see anything to correct in what I have said?

I do not wish to worry you but I hope you will write and tell me whether you think it would do any harm for me to be in touch with your sister. It would indeed, be a great pleasure to see her in Australia. I feel I know you quite well from the picture of 'Blue' in the Peapickers. Do you play the violin?

With all good wishes,
Yours sincerely,

MSS 115
June Langley to Beatrice Davis
12 July 1950

Dear Miss Davis,

As you say there is much I did not mention in relation to my sisters work. Apparently you have been more in touch with those matters, than I have. I see nothing to correct in your statements, but cannot add to them.

My sister has lived a life of self-indulgence, a selfish life, and has paid dearly for it.

The care of a beloved but ageing mother, has been my lifelong privilege, and in this my sister although eulogising my mothers memory and imagination, contributed nothing toward her physical well being at any time in her life.

My mother succumbed to a condition which was brought about by sorrow and great anxiety, this was in 1944, two years after my sister was committee, by her husband, to the Auckland Mental Hospital. Hilary Clark a struggling young art student and my sister were married in 1937.

Bisi a dark haired little girl was born some time in the same year. They lived in Birkenhead, or at least Eve did, in an old back owned by a Maori, known as Gran, this town is located across the harbour from Auckland city.

Hilary was at that time a teacher of a small group of youthful artists at Elan School of Art, and paid occasional visits to the bach as the spirit....moved him, usually the spirit accompanied him.

My sister subsisted on some sort of charitable allowance, preferring this manner of existence to good honest work, and in the meantime writing a few poems, and moulding figures out of clay, to adorn the window sills of the dwelling.

At that time I had through diligence and frugal living managed to save sufficient money from my earnings in the office of the Albien Meter Co, supporting my mother as well; to purchase a small sweet shop. Never think it was my ambition to be a satisfied small shop owner, but, it meant that after four years of living in rooms in other peoples dingy houses, we would be alone, in some place of our own.

I was able in turns with Little Mia to pay visits to indolent Eve, who was usually found in a semi naked state, lying like a brown snake in the deep grass under a summer sun. How we both envied her. To be outside, forever, never to live again like a blowfly in a bottle. Someday.... We would take with us food and if we could spare it money.

Mia and I never thought to criticise her, always...Poor Eve...There was no one to blame but herself, everything that ever happened to her had been of her own seeking.

In the PEA PICKERS her great desire was to be famous, and to be loved, this last seems to be as far away as ever, for although Eve bore Hilary three children, her indifference to the needs of others, and complete disregard for normal living, and in saying this I mean as she was able to lie about all day, a plate of jelly and a cup of cocoa suffice to sustain her, actually it was not fair treatment for a man who had to work in a quarry.
When the war began Hilary lost his position at Elam, his pupils had been diminishing for sometime; and so to make ends meet he had to tackle menial tasks. In the meantime they had moved to Chelsea, still near the original locality, and there roomed with the derelict widow of a Dr Gausson. Whisky was her mainstay.

Another child a fair haired boy Langley was born and there under similar conditions. It was there that Hilary bullied Eve into writing PEAPICKERS and I venture to say that but for him it would never have been written.

...Eve has always been indifferent how she has to live, as long as work was not brought into it. To my knowledge she has worked only once since arriving in N.Z. 1932, and that was unavoidable. This piece of history was made in the same year, to my memory, when new to the country she made her way to Wanganui, and there was forced to work for her board at the Girls Friendly Hostel, that lasted a few months only.

Getting back to the story, old Mrs Gausson who suffered from incurable cancer died about 1935 or thereabouts, and another move was imminent.

Across the damp gully from Gaussons house, in a weathered old four roomed verandahed cottage dwelt an old man, who regaled all and sundry, reluctant or otherwise each Sunday afternoon, to the strains of old time waltzes marches and sentimental ditties, scraped out of the strained bowels of an ancient “convolvulous” type of gramophone, you know the sort. This was brought out onto the shaky verandah and with the old man faithfully in attendance, saw the day decline, to say nothing of the suffering neighbours.

This old man died, and the house was put up for sale at £50. Here was Eve’s, Ultima Thule, and so with Hilary’s mother providing the cash they became house-owners, and having no furniture and little else the moving, or the process of moving was expeditious.

Hilary attacked the interior with commendable vigour and soon had it repapered, the dividing wall between the front rooms was torn down and a large room was made.

“The dragon green, the luminous, the serpent haunted sea”, splendidly executed in gold leaf; (that did not deter the chimney from belching forth great gusts of smoke); graced the mantle, and later extra windows gave views of the city across the harbour. It looked like a Whistler or Turner, before evening, that it glowed with brilliance of a jeweller’s window.

Here the PEAPICKERS was finished, and it was here that the first edition was signed “To Mia the mother and Blue the mate”, another child was expected in November 1941, and Hilary developed signs of tuberculosis, it was no wonder.

Karl a boy was born, and seven weeks later they left their home, aboard the Saunterer a converted Lifeboat on which Hilary, with promise of things to come, had paid a small deposit.

After a good voyage in fine weather, they reached the outlying islands of Coromandel Peninsular, wandered about the various beaches, slept I derelict huts, and then went on to Coromandel. Here Hilary received news that made a hasty curtailment of their adventures necessary. One rough day they set out, and before they had gone any distance, a huge wave hit the boat and upset a large pot of boiling water on the two children who were in the cock pit. With the help of a nearby launch they were conveyed to Coromandel Hospital, and owing to their severe burns; on the body fortunately, the children remained in hospital for some months. In the meantime Eve was befriended by an Australian nurse, who later had charge of the children when Eve entered the Mental Hospital; Hilary entered the Army, later the Airforce. It was from here that Eve while on a visit to Auckland was committed to the Mental Hospital. Her case was diagnosed as schizophrenia. Her husband visited her twice in seven years, and I visited her at intervals, fortnightly when we lived in Campbell’s Bay, where I had bought a house for mother, and later when we took up land at Mangawai, some 8 miles distant, every few months. In the meantime I wrote weekly, sent delicacies which I made, attended to her correspondence, bout and chose, and marked clothes and all I could while nursing a sick mother, and kept her supplied with some reading matter. In fact but for an old pensioner Mr May, who was a very good friend to her, I was her only visitor. Needless to say my mother never visited the Hospital, she seemed to fail from the day of admittance.

Meanwhile I contacted Sir Hugh Cairns, the eminent brain surgeon Lt. Commander Gairdner American authority, wrote describing Eve’s case history, but it appeared there was nothing they could do to help. I even sent copies of her book in order to interest them, Sir Hugh Cairns, in fact both of these eminent men wrote kindly sympathetic letters, which I sill retain, and except for my strong belief that someday she would be well again there appeared that nothing could be done. I just about pestered the life out of
Dr Buchanan the Medical Superintendent at the Hospital writing offering to take all responsibility and bring my sister home.

One wonderful day in February a letter came, saying that if I was still willing to take my sister on probation, to write and make arrangements. I phoned at once and it was duly arranged.

On Sunday March 6, 1949. Eve left the Hospital.

We hired a local car at Mangawai where we still lived, and with great excitement, mine of course, we set out for Auckland which was 80 miles away. We reached there at the appointed hour, I of course came prepared with a change of clothes for Eve, as her Hospital clothes were always in such a state.

Out she came, “Hullo June, where’s the car” and on seeing it, she dashed past me brushing my offering of apparel aside, her arms clutching the typewriter I am now using (and on which all her work has been written) loaded it in the waiting car the driver attended to a couple of dilapidated suitcases, and with never a backward glance to farewelling nurses and inmates she flung herself on the back seat, and said “Hurray”!

On the long coastal journey home, she cried out at the glimpses of earth and sky, an occasional gum tree, and rung my hand, at intervals, How happy we both were. If only little Mia, could have lived to share this great day. What surpassed all was the first glimpse of the open sea, the great breakers rolling in on the Orewa beach, the road running alongside. No one could share the joy we were the only PEAPICKERS and there was no one that could understand us, except our beloved Little Mia.

Mangawai was reached, and as we lived across a mile of tidal river we crossed in our boat powered by an outboard motor. She seemed rather terrified of the sea, as it was rather rough, but we were soon home, and David had spent a week preparing a room, the walls newly painted cream and a little bed with a flowered Wagga, and flowered curtains was ready.

The first night passed well enough. Eve spent the day making excursions amongst the bush, gathering cones from the tall pines, or sitting under the heavily laden peach trees, eating her way to a sure attack of dysentery. We had everything to offer there loads of butter cream fruit and vegetables, and soon she was putting on weight. From six stone to nine stone in no time. Of course we had a pretty rugged time on and off, with all sorts of descriptions of dreams, strange disturbing moods, and general upset of our very peaceful lives, where bedtime was at 7pm, (and we had usually stayed up to hear the Australia stations at 10pm and though nothing of midnight and after listening to entertainment from Australia). I tried to fall in with her desires but not David, he said let her get used to normal living or our life is going to be Hell.

After 6 months of this I became ill with a nervous breakdown. I had been through years of long hours of work with never a let up, from 1934 until 1949 with very little rest. In fact for five years I worked from morning until night, with little rest and too much responsibility. In 1941 (I had met David a year previously) I sold the business, and live with little Mia at Cambells Bay. David was bursting with energy, and I was tired to Death, but everywhere he wanted to go, we went. Then in 1943 he had an opportunity to take over a broken down Poultry Farm, off we went and tackled that, in the meantime Little Mia was ailing and I was suffering fearful headaches, and was run down. Little Mia died on November 12 1944 six days after my birthday. I spent months wearing myself away grieving, calling her name in the empty house... it was terrible.

All the time in between grieving for them both. So here I was ill. I staggered around unable to control my limbs loath to give in, taking medicine which the old doctor assured David would put me on my feet in a fortnight. In the meantime we had sold Crossover Farm Wangawai, and had bought, as Eve aptly put it when she saw the property, “ half the southern hemisphere.” David and the PEA PICKERS landed on the 400 acres in October 21 1949. It is a great stretch of land that takes in miles of glorious coast overlooking the Pacific Ocean, and every ship that sets out for dear Australia must pass the white house on the hill. At present we have some store stock but intend to establish a Jersey Stud, we have the nucleus of one at present.

I have had ten months of weekly injections for nervous breakdown but am still having them at intervals, for as soon as I think I can dispense with them all the conditions present themselves again. Talk about Old Man of the Sea. Someday waiting will end. ...

[MSS 121]

...I have mentioned previously, that during my sister’s confinement to the Mental Hospital, she was visited on two occasions by her husband. Once he brought the children to see her.

In regard to this last, personally I think it was not in the interest of the children that they should have been brought at all, so I do not criticise that reluctance on his part, but on the neglect of the mother I cannot condemn enough.
On one occasion when I was in Auckland to see Eve, I rang Hilary, he was as he is now, lecturing in Art at the Teachers Training College. He met me, and I approached him regarding his wilful neglect. His only comment was; I have no sentiment in the matter. He went on to tell me that he was living with a very nice woman, who knew how to look after him, and that the children (whom I had not been able to trace) were in a small private Home, and came home for vacations. They were well and happy, and learning music, and he wanted them to forget the past. He informed me that he as the father wished me to keep out of the matter, and would not divulge the location, also after a lapse of seven years he intended to apply for a divorce.

I informed Dr. Buchanan of this matter, and it seems something was done about Eve’s probation, the seven years would have been up in August 1949. Not that my efforts have helped at all, as he refused to accept responsibility for Eve and he inferred that I had intentionally made this move, which I had of course.

We have had a lot of trouble about obtaining a pension for Eve, his salary prevented it, yet, although he offered to pay her board with us, namely $1 a week, not that we wanted it as far as Eve was concerned but we did think he should help, as he had avoided all responsibility so long. He has not even kept his word there. Eve took the matter in her own hands one day when David had taken me to the doctor. She must have left as soon as we departed.

David was very angry that she should go like that, after all the trouble we had had getting her out of Hospital. I was very worried in case anything should happened to her, but rather than notify the authorities I thought it better to give her a chance. She wrote to me on arrival in Auckland, she had approached Hilary who naturally was very angry, I can imagine it. Anyway she has made him support her, and now has a job at the Auckland Public Library. I think she has done well. David is still angry at it all, but I don’t care what she does as long as she is well and free. He thinks she is ungrateful to me for my care, and of course there is this illness of mine as well, but good will come of it all someday. At least I did my best.

In regard to writing to Eve, I should not mention the republication of the book, it may affect her as before, unbalance her I mean, better to let well alone. She is interested in her work and seems to be getting back to normal. Whether it will last is hard to say. She has not seen the children for seven years, and does not seem interested in them, and I have explained her husband’s attitude. I will enclose a letter to verify this, to so no mention of that matter either. I know you will understand Miss Davis.

Eve is not allowed access to her money in the Public Trust under orders from Dr. Blake Palmer, so that should explain something. I will enclose her last letter to me. Her earning plus 30/- from her husband total £13 a fortnight, so she has enough to love on, and is boarding in the city. This is about all I think. I used to play the violin exactly as written in the PEA PICKERS but since Little Mia left this world I do not play. Eve and I did play for a couple of nights after she came home she on the mouthorgan and me the violin but we soon gave up. Too much radio these days and no Mia to say “My word you girls, I mind the time when Bill Grey...”. Ah well I must away to stoke the fire and attend to a hungry man’s dinner. So its farewell from Kauri Mountain, and thankyou for your kind interest.

Arriverdierci,

MSS 61
Hilary Clark to David and June
n.d.

Your letter of 28th to hand. Am interested in your report of Eves (sic) recovery.
Sorry the money is not up to date, but though my salary may prevent the payment of a pension, it still does not go very far.
I have absolutely no intention of resuming life with Eve, and the children are quite happy as...

[MSS 63]
...they are, so the only thing in the meanwhile is to arrive at some amicable arrangement.
I shall go immediately to see the solicitor who was going to handle my divorce for me (as a result of the lapse of seven yrs) and find from him the best solution, and then let you know immediately what can be done.

Yrs,

MSS 109
Eve Langley to June
n.d.

Dear June

I am dropping you a short note from here, and am then going down? Street, shopping. It is Friday night. No letter from you, so far. I hope you are well, and everything is going well with you.

Have just finished another week’s work. Very busy. Lots of books in. Auckland is furiously busy; rushing around on iron wheels. Producing everything for its own consumption, from modern books to the I presume, earliest days, to affect the book. I am still at the private Hotel in ? Street. I haven’t seen Hilary lately, but am still being faithfully maintained, and sign the book at his solicitor’s every Friday for my “income”. Hilary is very good, really. There is no one like friend husband, after all.

He never troubles me in any way; just sticks to his job, and helps keep me going. The Teachers’ Training College out at Epsom is a marvellous looking place, by the way. ? hundreds of adults in class there, and a frightfully flash hotel they all boast Awfully Oxford. Young people, with marvellous account, and, strangely enough, very nice young people; very kind and obliging. Hilary lectures on art and doesn’t have to arrive at the College until 10.30 every morning. Fortune person!

The masters think an awful lot of him, and seem to expect great things of Hilary. He is quite unchanged — but well ? in a formal sort of way.

I was at a writers evening, the other night. Some very good verse was read – and Harry Brennan rushed into the room in his usual histrionic manner? and greeted me as though I had just returned from the Tombs ?. He wrote? histories during the war, and has returned with thousands of photographs of Italy and a fine cardboard collection of its ?

Some beautiful Madonnas, all gilded and colour, carrying the immortal babe.

Harry read some of his phoenix like poetry to the assembly, and I saw him home to his bus …

[MSS 113]

…and shook his cold hand under the Autumn trees.

On retreating, he called at the Library and collected me, and we drank at a city milk shake bar and discussed energetically, all the pictorial Italy that he spread before me.

I have no other heroes June, and am still waiting — not wasting, waiting for a letter from you, “when you are indisposed”. It is very wet in the city. Equally damp in the country I suppose. The library is blossoming with ?. Two or three new writers may be seen lunching with the Boss, the Chief Librarian, in the Staff Room — and staring morosely around in search of Primavera: otherwise, Auckland is quiescent, awfully awaiting the winter – very dark skies and grey buildings. I must now go down the Street and do some small shopping, under brilliant lights among a brilliant people.

Love to you both,

MSS 139
Beatrice Davis to Junior Langley
26 October 1950

Dear Junior Langley,

I feel ashamed not to have written before this to tell you how deeply I appreciated the fascinating but very sad account you gave me of your sister’s life in New Zealand. Admiring her book and the Blue I met in it, so sincerely, it was of very special interest to me to learn what you told me. I do hope that Eve is still able to do the job at the Auckland Public Library. But, from what you said, I felt it would be better for her not to know that I had enquired of her from you and that you had written telling me so much. Therefore, I have not yet written to her. But now I have a logical reason for doing so, in the form of a request for permission in include a poem of hers in a poetry anthology. Please read and then send on the letter I enclose -or answer it for me if you think it would be troublesome for Eve to do so.

I do look forward to hearing from you from time to time, and hope that you have recovered your good health in that very beautiful place with the white house over looking the sea.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

MSS 141
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
26 October 1950

Dear Eve Langley,
June Langley to Beatrice Davis
7 November 1950

Dear Beatrice Davis

Thank you so much for writing to me, do not be ashamed not to have written before, let me be the only one to be ashamed to have as you truly say “told you so much”, about one who is so dear to me. I felt so bitter, prodded and tortured, by David who does not, cannot fell the sad deep love I feel, for such a genius, as Eve. I know someday her work will be appreciated more so than today. I am quite convinced that Eve Langley will be remembered as the greatest of Australian writers, I will not be remembered, because through misfortune I have not achieved anything Art but that is not the only reason, I never had the talent nor ability. Eve sacrificed all for her writing, we her family have all suffered, but what of it, why should I complain, it is just that my beloved Little Mia did not survive. On the 12th of this month it will be six long years since her death. Yesterday the 6th was my birthday, I conveniently forgot it, when one gets to the “Going down hill” stage, as Little Mia aptly called it, it is best to forget. I felt very sad all day, for this time last year, Eve was with me. But how different it is today, I will have to tell you.

About a week ago I had a letter of advice from the Mental Hospital, it read “As you know your sister has been admitted under observation”, I did not know, how terrible, again after being home and as I thought safe. Why did she leave me, why?

She often said to me “You will not let me go back to the Mental Hospital my June? Never I would assure her, stay with me, no one will take you from me. I had often warned her never to go near Hilary, he would commit her again I knew, and that is exactly what has happened. He re-committed her. The Doctor told David I was not to contact Eve after she left, as any anxiety would be detrimental to my recovery. Davis said that I did not.

I thought she was safe it was quite evident that she did too, so self assured in her letters, but my Doctor told David it would not last, I did not believe it.

So far I have heard nothing further, I think I will risk anger and write to her. She has not written to me, she will know how true my words were. Eve has changed a great deal. I thought we would have happy times together, but sometimes I think she hates me, still sees beauty in me, God knows where, I wish I could grow a beard, so that she would not envy me. It has always come between us, the hair, the teeth, the face. I have never sought men, in fact I don’t greatly care for anyone except my family. I have imagined I have been in love, but some how or other I become indifferent after a while, it is different with Eve, she has always tortured herself about worthless men, it seems she must suffer, to write. As regards the Celtic Guest, this was written at Chelsea in the old house I mentioned, and the year 1941, I cannot see any reason why it should not be included in the Anthology, in fact I know Eve will be proud. Here I must mention the fact that I hold all of Eve’s manuscript. Actually I don’t know whether one could call it manuscript, mostly a daily chronicle of her life. There is another book The Golden Gum Tree, not finished as far as I can see, it is a continuation of PEA PICKERS from the time I left. At least from the time I was dismissed, I did not go willingly, but Eve wanted to be alone, to pursue Macca and Love. I have read it only recently, although I have had possession of it and most of the journals for nine years. I never read it, I did not wish to pry into these papers that were entrusted to me before Eve became ill “June, she said guard this”; a large cushion cover jammed with tightly rolled manuscript with your life. I have, but now she had asked the Public Trust to collect them, how I have worried about it, what will happen to them? I feel I must know what they were. I do now and I feel I must resist fiercely, such a great responsibility to posterity. If they are lost, destroyed, no I will not let them pass out of my hands. What power has the public Trust, can they force me, will Eve?

What can I do, advise me dear Beatrice Davis, I shall probably land myself in gaol or in disfavour. I am to see another Doctor, my hands are always, numb, and also one foot, I walk up hill with great effort and suffer for it, one leg only, the knee feels as though it is about to protrude out backwards, and it aches and aches. I will be discussing my operations next, I havent had any, but I could easily invent them.
Blue

MSS 143
Beatrice Davis to Junior Langley
22 November 1950

Dear Blue,

I was distressed to hear that Eve is back where she was – and apparently through Hilary. I suppose you cannot altogether blame him, and can only regret that she did not go back to you, instead of putting herself in his way. But it may, perhaps, be for the best since you yourself seem to be far from well, and the strain of caring for Eve might have been more than you could endure.

Thankyou for telling me about Celtic Quest. I have passed the information on to Mr Green.

As to the manuscripts, I hate to think of their being lost or destroyed, and in your place I think I should not hand them over. Needless to say, this is not the official advice of Angus & Robertson, Ltd., but merely my own feeling in the matter. After all, since no document of safe custody was given by you to anyone, no legal action could very well be taken. I can scarcely advise you to tell lies; but for all anyone know you might have destroyed the papers yourself years ago as rubbish; or, being ill yourself, and doubting your capacity to guard the papers, you might have handed them to someone else you could trust for safe-keeping. I will help you in any way I can, but I could scarcely ask you to give the manuscripts to me to look after. Do you know anyone else – a person of integrity who also has some interest in literary things – to whom you could appeal?

Is Eve still doing any writing to your knowledge? The only thing that would make me fell you should do as she wishes would be her intention, and capacity, to do further work for which she would need to refer to the papers in question.

I am indeed sorry that you are so harassed when you have been so unwell. It is useless to worry too relentlessly; you have already done so much for Eve, you have your own life to lead, and if you are to be able to help her in the future you will need all the balance and health you can retain.

With warmest good wishes,

Yours sincerely

PS If you would like to send me the papers I’ll put them in our strong room for you.

MSS [NO NUMBER]
Blue to Beatrice Davis
n.d.

My dear Beatrice,

You know my address well enough ? At least in this instance. I was admitted to the Whangarei Hospital on Dec 8th with Hysterical Paralysis (which is?) original, it felt that way too. Sometime after I received your last letter, I lost the use of my “good” leg, no reflex, no sensation, and this extended to the waist, it seems the condition is unorthodox, and puzzled the doctors, although subsequent letters I received from my old mate Steve; assured me that “At your weight (9.6) you should soon be better” and “you will be alright in the summer” and lastly “If its hysteria you will soon be well”. Now that I am only 9 stone I can dismiss the first assurance I think, summer is here and my condition is only relieved, faintly at that, so what do you suggest dear Beatrice, have you anything in the way of assurance you can give me?

Ah well, as Lawson often said, I can see that Eve is not worried about old Blue, maybe it is just as well, I would not like to see anyone in this state.

To finalise the tale of woe, I had daily injections of penicillin, and vitamins and dismissed with these few parting words from Dr. Lavity, “There is nothing more that we can do for you, the cure rests with yourself”. I don’t ask you advice about that Beatrice. I expect it means “think of yourself for a change”, just as you suggested in your last letter. My own doctor gives me three weeks to produce some sort of reflex, otherwise Auckland and electric shock treatment. Had a spinal and lumbar Xray in hospital, negative results, I think one never gets to the root of a condition in hospital, tell you nothing and take you nowhere. Medical ethics they call it I think, dash it all, still thinking. Let us look at Steve, just before the debacle, I had a letter telling me she was back at the Library, after a month in the Mental Hospital just for a rest. I still hold the manuscript, sandely, this time, Eve may be up in April. We are about 180 miles from Auckland, and she has a holiday due then so it seems. Have you heard from her Beatrice, I sent your letter on?

Jan 9th
I have just heard from Eve again, I find it hard, when I read these very ordinary, nay, dammedly commonplace letters, to reconcile the Eve of today, with the vivid, imaginative, genius, I have known since childhood. Will she ever be the same, please God, return to me my lost one.

I could show you letters that cover most of her life, all of amazing beauty.

I would like to possess a copy of the Anthology that holds Celtic Guest in its firm hands. Is this possible? Unfortunately, I was not able to find any, or not many copies of PEAPICKERS Eve gave Little Mia and I a copy, first edition, she wrote therein “To Mia the Mother and Blue the mate, from Steve”. I managed to pounce on a well read copy, in a shabby second hand shop in the Point Chevalier suburb of Auckland. This was on my way to the Mental Hospital, which is nearly. I presented this copy to J.C. Fisher, Principal of the Elam School of Art, first handing it to my dear one, as we sat together in the large dining room, amongst other patients and their relatives.

Eve wrote: “To J. C. Fisher from a deeper fisher which that hands of the Peapickers, sought eternally”. That is from memory but, quite correct for all that, I don’t seem to be able to forget anything, a hurt, praise, time or place laughter or tears. (For those green pearly.) You can see what I mean dear Beatrice?

Another copy withdrawn from the clutching hands of a person of little or no consequence, I sent with a letter describing Eve’s case to Sir Hugh Cairns, who was not able to see me, nor read the book, so took it with him back to Oxford. I must write to him some day, and tell him what has happened. The Public Trust managed to get three copies of the American edition, from New York no less, one went to another doctor who is now with “K. Force” in Korea. Just read in our local paper, I will send you one, one of these days; that he has set up a medical inspecting quarters I a tent, with a few other locals as orderlies. Be alright if this hot weather prevailed there, but, cant say I ever felt any admiration nor curiosity for snowy regions.

I did climb Mt Earnslaw, the only female in a small party, when I first came over here. There was an Englishman a scion of the Wedgwood family a Botanist and his two sons, and Blue Beesknees. Needless to say I was first on the summit 9,000 feet. There was snow up there, in DECEMBER, and the imprint of deer.

Before I make my obeisance to a very remarkable woman, I must tell my dear Beatrice, of an interesting discovery.

When I was in hospital, David had occasion to penetrate some of our Kauri filled deep gullies, a mile or more from acasa. Femme, or in contradiction Diddle Boy a small black and tan terrier barked urgently in a gully, David scramble down, to find that she had bailed up a large KIWI. Being Australian and extremely agile, he caught it, and said it weighed about 10 lb. A few feathers stayed with him when he liberated it. I rushed to a budding Ornithologist who writes the Nature Notes in our local and will try to clip a copy when we go in again Arrivaderci casa amica

Blue

MSS 145
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
25 June 1951

Dear Beatrice Davis,

Profound apologies for not answering your letter of OC. 1950. My sister sent it to me, only recently, and I have been waiting on my Remington and MSS , which have only just come down from the Northland.

I do hope you will forgive the wide hiatus. And I trust that you will find it possible to republish The Pea-Pickers. I am doing library-work at the Auckland Public Library at present, and the librarians tell me that the book is very popular, and in good demand. It gets praise of all sorts; a varied mixture of appreciation from all sections of the community. Mr Colgan, the sub-deputy chief librarian, is passionately fold of the book, really, and collects all sorts of data concerning it, and urges me to produce, like Keats, “more and yet more.” So I DO hope it is republished. Other readers tell me, and the librarians, that they roar with laughter from beginning to end, and want more (apparently) laughter.

I have another book in manuscript, practically ready. It is call, “White Topees”: this book, with Victoria as a background, relates the hilarious adventurers of a tea-planter from the islands, who started an experimental plot of tea-plantation in Gippsland. “White Topees” is quite good, I think. If you are interested in it, I could send it over to you.

Regarding, somewhat late in the day, the poem, “Celtic Guest”, and H. M. Green; The poem was written in New Zealand, over on the North Shore, to be precise: I am now living in the city, up near my ancient haunt, the Old Windmill, which has been taken down, and leaves only a ghost of remembrance.
Sincerely yrs,

MSS 147
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
23 August 1951

Dear Eve Langley,
I cannot tell you how delighted I was to hear from you again — and to know that you have another book in manuscript. Please do send me White Topees at once. I like your description of it as “hilarious”, since humour is so sadly rare amongst our writers, and I look forward immensely to reading it.

We knew you had been ill and did not wish to worry you, anxious though we were to be in touch with you again. The Peapickers will most certainly be reprinted some time, and I hope not too far hence; but the programme for this year is already over-crowded, and there would certainly be no hope for 1951. It is a delicious book, and we think there has been nothing quite like it before or since.

Please do write again if you have the time and feel in the mood. It seems hard, after so wide a hiatus, to start off again on the closer footing of exchanging ideas. So perhaps you will help me by beginning.

With warmest good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

MSS 151
Beatrice Davis to Junior Langley
23 August 1951

Dear Blue,
Please forgive me if you can for neglecting to reply to your very nice letter. I was sincerely concerned to hear of this mysterious “hysterical paralysis”, but somehow pressure of events has thwarted my real wish to write to you. I do hope you are better by now and that your ailment, which seems obviously nervous in origin, has been conquered either by determination or by easier circumstances. No doubt you have had far too much worry over Eve and other matters, and far too many responsibilities to harass you. But tranquillity is hard to achieve in a busy life, even in the absence of family or emotional burdens.

I was astonished and delighted to hear from Eve a little time ago and have replied to her, asking her to show me the manuscript of White Topees which she says she has completed. It would give me great pleasure to see more of her work and to be in touch with her again, and I can only hope that our association will continue and perhaps bring forth further published works.

As you say, copies of the Peapickers are now very rare since it has been out of print for so many years; I do hope, however, that the new edition will appear before too long. Unfortunately, I can give no precise dates of publication — perhaps in about a year’s time.

The new edition of H. M. Green’s Modern Australian Poetry, to be published by the Melbourne University Press, and in which he wishes to include Celtic Guest, has not yet appeared. When it does I shall do my best to send you a copy.

I was fascinated with the kiwi feathers you sent me — thank you so much. What an exciting expedition of discovery that must have been for David. I wish I had something as interesting to send you from Sydney, but perhaps you will imagine a little puff of one of our more objectionable westerly winds enclosed in this envelope. I hope you will soon write to me again and let me know what (sic) your health has really improved.

Ever yours,

MSS 153
Press clipping
Kiwi at Parua Bay

MSS 127
June Langley to Beatrice Davis
September 1951

Dear Beatrice,
No use waiting longer, quite obvious that Steve Hart, has done with Bert Beesknees for the time being. I had hoped to exchange news with my Beatrice, but no answer to my last letter, the second one, both unanswered. Thank you for your news of Eve, anything further will be gratefully received. I was trying
to place, the basis of the idea for the new manuscript, faintly remember, something written in the Hospital with an Indian or East army flavour.

Of course I think, her own life is far better material, but perhaps too personal and so revealing. Anyway time will tell, everything she has written is brilliant, devilish too, I should know, so often the victim, not that it worries me, but some view it differently.

With regard to my curious condition, had to have further advice after writing you last, and Australian doctor this time, Gerald Morgan Brown, was Medical Superintendent with the Whangarei Hospital, now has his own practice here.

Being strangers here we didn't know anyone, but had heard vaguely of him, decided to see him in February last, told him the other diagnosis which was received with a faint smile. "I do not think you are the hysterical type, much too sensible". Then followed the examination, "I think you have a rare condition, it is either functional or a deficiency Disseminated Sclerosis, very crippling, but you will be alright, in time, although the condition may occur again at intervals, or may never come again.

So, more injections in the buttock, but it is going, and this large calm Australian was the only doctor who could tell me what I had, and I had even been examined by several visiting medical men while in Hospital.

If you have a medical acquaintance ask him about it, would be interested to know more of it. It makes coiled dry bark of the feet and hands, replaced the joints with solid pieces of wood, removes the reflex from knees and elbows, makes the hip joints solid, and leaves the face in a perpetual “after an injection at the dentists for extraction” state. This all has lasted for two years this month, the face effect only lasted a few months grazia Dio the injection effect embraced the whole body, so this old fellow have gooda time. Self denial is the right method, save the money, starve the frame work like blazes for years on that, and what have you, why! Disseminated Sclerosis, bless yer 'art Miss. Well otherwise I wouldn’t own over 400 acres of N.Z. with my own home, care, stock, etc with no bowing and scraping to a man for a few shilling, why do you know what Beatrice, the position is more or less reversed.

David lost the total use of his right hand in the polio epidemic in 1936, he came into my business place in 1940, my main interest, was to get a home for my mother, sell the business, invest the money in land, and proceed to in some way, provide for Mia and I, in the future, but how, I wasn’t sure as actually I had no knowledge of farming.

This was where David came in, he had been on the land all his life and so was placed in rather a hopeless position, with one hand left to do the job, and was when I met him, working as an escort for the Blind Institute in Auckland for £2 a week.

Like myself, he had been previously married, his wife, left him for another man, but in my case it was different, John was the scion of the Josiah Wedgwood pottery family in England ...

MSS 129

...and with whom I had travelled on the Sydney Express in Sept 1929, myself bound for Gosford, where Peppino had offered me work on the orange grove, he was hoping to purchase eventually.

Steve I had left working in the boarding house at Panlooks hop garden where she had become enamoured with one of the pickers, after the picking I moved on to Boorahman, near Wangaratta, to cut millet (broom) for Roy Thompson, this finished I continued where I had left off the previous year, rabbiting. It seemed Steve and I had parted, she had become interested I men, while I only looked for adventure, but with an eye to saving and earning, enough to provide better and happier conditions for Little Mia, who was growing old without hope of security, I was the only one who ever sent her money, which she seldom asked for, but I never wrote without sending something.

Eve could not spare anything for one who had sacrificed so much for us, and who never complained, but always laughed with us, suffered Steve’s ridicule and selfishness. Presents for men and strangers together with her own needs took all the money she was prepared to work for, but she was often the borrower, debts which ever remained, unpaid.

So I didn’t reach Gosford, for here my lone journey ended.

Not that marriage appealed to me, in fact I was afraid of sex, and had no wish to adventure in this matter. John, evidently had been recalled to England, and had just received money from his family there.

He was a nice person, 20 years my senior, and my mind then was terribly young so when he agreed that we would be companions, ONLY, we were married at St James Cathedral I think it ism but you will know which church I mean.

I refused his offer to take me home, for Mias permission, for I knew, once I saw Little Mia, I would not go on with the marriage.
Of course I was attracted to him, for he was an attractive man, of good family, I had seen evidence of this in letters from his solicitors.

My mind was still full of desire for travel, and here was an opportunity, and I could help little Mia, when we returned from N.Z, where he intended to take me. But that is another story, Beatrice, and I can see I have forgotten affairs of the moment.

John always lived beyond his means, so I was treated as a child, and the future held no hope of independence for me, so I left him in 1933, once again to work toward this end, security, and independence.

With David’s knowledge of farming and myself as the financier, as he had nothing, which suited me, for this time I would have sole charge of the finance, and although I say it myself, this could not be in better hands, for it is not my nature to be selfish.

Love and sex I know little of, and have no wish to further my experiences, so my body is my own, I ask nothing of man, but cooperation toward one mutual end, independence, and security.

I have had a small success with my drawings, although I have not been able to use my hands much since June 1950, I have started one drawing recently and will be able now that I have attended to other things, to indulge myself in Art.

Half a dozen were exhibited here in the Art section at the Winter Show, and were reviewed by the local paper thus.

“The best individual collection, is probably a set of six water colours which have a fresh appeal about them because they are different from the purely representational art of most of the other pictures.”

These are products of my imagination in colour and line, as it is natural for me to draw, just as it is natural for Eve to write, but mostly these drawings compare with her poetry.

The last time I wrote, I asked her to send me some copies of her recent work...

MSS 131

...so that I could attempt to illustrate portion that may inspire me to this end, no answer to my letter.

The last of heard of her was a letter from a solicitor, asking that her manuscript and typewriter be railed to him, but I disregarded that and returned everything through the Public Trust.

I would be very happy Beatrice if you could enquire from the Italian Consul for me the whereabouts of Peppino Nicholas, whom I last heard of C/O Mr Charkey or some such name in Lisarow Gosford, that’s how Peppino spelt it anyway. You will remember him in Peapickers, he had a great voice and played the mouthorgan with a deep shuffling rhythm.

He was one of the best types of immigrants, industrious, honest, and very fond of we two and Little Mia.

You are my only link with Australia, I did write to a friend of our youth whom I last heard of from Cairo, he was War Correspondent with the A.I.F, and wrote me congratulating us both on the publication of the book.

I couldn’t think whether he was on the Melbourne Sun or Argus, so addressed the letter to the Sun. No answer.

His people lived in East Malvern, his name George F Walker, sometime I long for a Directory Melbourne and Gippsland just to discover where all those we once knew are. Then there was Kay in Peapickers, an early love an only love as far as it went, he was an only son, of a large Dandenong Draper A B Wilson, his name was Keith Angus Wilson, he was a student of Electrical Engineering when I knew him and a very accomplished pianist at 16, he is somewhere in Melbourne, if he wasn’t killed in the last war.

Then there was Willie Davidson Mia’s brother, he had the Richmond Club and Early of Lincoln Hotels I Richmond outside Melbourne, and Uncle Boas Davidson or T.A. who lost all as an unfortunate owner of race horses.

Sometimes I feel like selling my property, and taking plane for Australia but where to? Australia is not home now, without little Mia.

When I was in business I used to collect any Australian money that came my way, still have about £10 in silver, it will keep, waiting for parity. I bought my first shares in a Northland project the other day, only £25 worth but I see they are worth £3 more already. Have put £3000 into this lump of land, it is 17 mile from Whangarei with a growing population now over 20,000. The Winter Show, where my drawings were on display drew 24000 and this Northland is an exquisite dear place. Although the road out here is rather rough it is a drive of outstanding beauty. The seas edge three parts of the way, flowering kowhais, a hanging large yellow pea-like flower on a leafless tree, covered with singing tuis,
dot the roadside, and I have never seen fruit trees growing wild along the roads anywhere as they do here. Going in, there is a 10 mile stretch of harbour scenery, on the return one faces magnificent Manaia pronounced Mah-ni-ah spelt Manaia, this is a massive area of sharp sky piercing rock acres of it, a fertile source of Maori legend. Always some shade of blue. The windows of this house are its main feature, landscape, with the “Dragon green the luminous, the serpent haunted sea”, making the interior a continuous gallery of seascapes, with foreground grassy ridges. In fact the house has almost more glass, than kauri in its construction, and speaking of jauris Beatrice, there are thousands of feet of them of this property, others are rimu, kiakatea, puriri lace bark, this last has an inner bark like insertion lace, and down amongst them roam the rare kiwi, crying harshly in the night. Pheasants and wild pigeons fly around the house all day, and I call out to them as they pass “Sweet bird”.

There are five dogs, Spot, a hard huntaway, Gyp a header, Boas only 9 months old but a champion, and the old rabbiters, I bet you didn’t know I was one. Ever Yours, June

MSS 155
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
n.d.

Dear Beatrice Davis,

You have made me very happy to think that you want White Topees at once. However, since the book is only finished; meaning that the one draft is here, I shall have to get to work and type out a separate draft for you, which wont take me long. I am at work on it now, and wish I could get through it in ten minutes and hand it over to you to enjoy. Anything written about the beloved one country, Australia, is very dear to me.

Still if I take three weeks or so over the re-typing you wont be impatient will you? I DO want to get it over to you as soon as I can. I have only the nights to work in now, because of my library work. When I wrote the Pea-pickers I was living privately at home over on the North Shore. It makes a difference. Some time ago I started a book called BEN HALL. I come from around Forbes and Jerilderie and generally Ben Hall country. When I get this book underway I think you will like it, someday. You have no idea how splendid it is to hear from you again. Nearly 10 years! No matter what’s happened in the interim, my country still stands firm. I have a lot of manuscript about it, on hand, and may keep going on Australian novels, if I am not interrupted, for the next ten years.

Meanwhile, I must apologise for this length of time in answering your letter. And I shall be only happy when White Topees is off my hands and in yours. Mr John Barr, the Chief-Librarian showed me a little book brought out by H. M. Green, in which he mentioned Peapickers very honorably (sic). If you see or hear from H. M. Green at all, you might give him my address, and if he wants any poems I could send them over. And now, I must get that MSS finished.

Yours sincerely,

MSS 157
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
2 October 1951

Dear Eve Langley,

No, of course, I shall not be impatient if you take three weeks over the typing of White Topees. I realise what it means having a job all day and trying to do work for yourself at night – very exhausting.

The book about the Ben Hall country I should like to see, too, I hope you find the time and the energy to complete it – I know you have the talent.

Yes, H. M. Green does admire your work and I shall pass of your message to him. It was he who wanted the poems for his Modern Australian Poetry anthology. By the way, have you anything you could send me to submit to this year’s editor of Australian Poetry – the firm’s own anthology in which you will remember having appeared a few years ago.

I saw your nice piece on the Bulletin red page – it baffled me with its reference to “Verelaine”, but had a lovely lilt and feeling about it.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

MSS 159
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
15 October 1951

Dear Beatrice Davis
I am still working away at the book, and have not very much more of it to do. It is encouraging to know that you are not impatient about it.

I had to go down to Coromandel to see about a big launch I have down in the shipyards there, and went down with a lot of Auckland Grammar School boys. Old boys. A very funny lot of creatures, and I took an exercise book with me, and made an opus out of them.

And I am going up to Rotorua for Labour Weekend. So shall take another exercise book and fill it full of impressions. Coromandel was superb in its springtime, and I am sending you some poems for the Anthology. Sulphuric sonnets in all their forms will probably follow the Rotorua trip. Also, during any spare time, I have been doing a lot of very delicate water-colours; my passion. They are of all ages, hues and variety, varying from early Babylonian horsemen harnessing horses, to the dance of the god Sardis, and Balkan and Hungarian dancing men and women. I have shown them to Mr John Barr, the Chief Librarian, who is also Director of the Art Gallery. He liked them very much. I wish I could find a publisher who could reproduce them for me, against and fronting my poems and short stories.

Then I have just finished a short volume of Coptic poems with illustrations; describing the wanderings of the Copts from Egypt in the 10th century or earlier. We have a very fine collection of Coptic MSS in the Grey Shaw Collection downstairs in the Art Gallery, and I drew on the MSS for my drawings. I don't know what to do with this little missal-like book. I am sending you the poems, however, and hope they will be of use,

Sincerely yours,

Poems enclosed:
The Bitter Bright Red Camellias
Octavian Agosto
Spring Morning at Coromandel NZ
Miranda and a Veranda
Thalassa
Not Far From Suva
The Train
Lilac
Wakarewarewa
Spring song
If you can't use all these, you could send some along to H. M. Green or any editor of any anthology you may know of.

EL

MSS 161
Beatrice Davis to Junior Langley
15 October 1951

Dear Blue,

I was very glad to get your September letter and to hear that your troublesome condition has been diagnosed and is being successfully treated. I do hope you will be able to face things calmly and to undergo all the right treatment so that you will soon be quite well again. Life is quite difficult enough without having illness to contend with as well.

How strange of Eve not replying to your letters. I think I told you that I had a note from her, in reply to one of mine asking about her manuscripts, in which she told me that she had completed a novel but was not yet ready to send it to me because it had to be retyped. I only hope that the novel really is ready and that she will send it to me soon. Eve has been sending verse to the Bulletin again lately – several very nice pieces, short ones. I shall always let you know if I have any news of her.

Thankyou for telling me your background story. In the light of the Peapickers, and knowing you a little through your letters, I found it fascinating though sad. But how lucky you are, and how wise to have invested in that 400 acres of lovely country. It sounds a most lovely place, and, if only you were not ill, I can imagine you and David running it very happily. I did not know about your drawing; though I knew of the violin, and had thought of you playing it on your mountain. The creative and emotional outlet that any art can give is so valuable in living, and I like to think of you drawing as well.

It will not be easy for me to find the whereabouts of the several people you mention in your letter as former friends in Australia. I shall do what I can. The only way to find Peppino, presuming he was still
in Gosford, would probably be through some old inhabitant there — and I am afraid I know no one at Gosford ...

MSS 163
... I am impressed by your lasting attachment to Australia in general and Gippsland in particular, for New Zealand must be a most lovely country. I expect it is not only a deep sense of nationality but a nostalgia of youth. If I could make a trip to New Zealand I should not leave it without visiting Kauri Mountain and meeting you.

Yours ever,

MSS 165
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley, 9 November 1951
Dear Eve Langley,
So delightful to hear from you and to get that rich batch of poems. I shall send them to Kenneth Mackenzie, who is editing the current Australian Poetry. I shall ask him to return to me soon the poems he does not wish to use. Then I shall show them, if I may, to Doug Stewart of the Bulletin or to the editor of Southerly. I presume that they have not been published before?

I hope soon to write to you more fully, being at the moment in a frantic rush preparing to get away for a fortnight on the Hawkesbury River. I like to imagine you painting water colours.

With all good wishes,
Yours sincerely,

PS Mr Green has already completed his selections for the second edition of Modern Australian Poetry anthology which will soon be published.

MSS 167
Beatrice Davis to Kenneth Mackenzie, Esq. 9 November 1951

Dear Kenneth,
Enclosed are some poems just received from Eve Langley, which I have not had time to read. Will you pick out anything you might wish to use for Australian Poetry and return the others to me? Eve has asked me to try to place them somewhere for her, which reminds me that you had better return them all, marking any of which you would like a copy, for there is no reason why they should not be published in some periodical before appearing in the anthology.

Yours sincerely,
I am rushing off to Sackville for a fortnight’s break

MSS 169
Eve Langley poem, Wakarewarewa, published in the Bulletin

MSS 171
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis 10 December 1951

Dear Beatrice Davis,
I am glad you like the Rotorua poems and the rest. I had a letter from Douglas Stewart recently saying that he had taken one, WHAKAREWAREWA, for the Sydney Bulletin. I thought I might tell you.

If you enjoyed the Hawkesbury as much as I did Rotorua, all will be well, in both countries. They are both very popular holiday-places.

Now, I am on the very last lap of WHITE TOPEES; but I shall keep it with me until after Christmas, when I shall send it to you in the New Year. I have been working on it much longer that I thought; but I cut it a good deal; a lot of matter that wasn’t of any interest except to growers. I was slow over it, because of a spot of ill-health recently; and then the trip down to Coromandel to see about the launch and the other trip to Rotorua; these things held me back.

My husband would like to run through the book before I send it over. He is lecturer out at the Teacher’s Training College at Epsom, and his criticisms are usually reliable. So I shant (sic) be sending the MSS over until New Year 1952.

I shall make a registered parcel of it, and mail it to you, and you can read it and see what you think of it.
Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.
Yours sincerely,
Appendix 2

Manuscripts 1952

MSS 173
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
21 January 1952

Dear Eve Langley,

It was so nice to hear from you, and I am sorry I did not write earlier and send you the usual good wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Needless to say, I am extremely anxious to see White Topees which you say you will be sending early in this year. Please send it as soon as you can, because I expect to be going away at the end of March and should naturally like to see it before I go. However, if this cannot be managed I should like you to send it to Nan McDonald whom you will know as a poet. She is a firm admirer of your work and you can be sure that she will be both appreciative and understanding.

I was sorry to hear of your brief illness and hope that you are quite well again.

Yours sincerely,

MSS 175
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
29 January 1952

Dear Beatrice Davis,

I was very happy to get your letter saying that you were extremely anxious to see White Topees, which I am forwarding under a separate cover to you tomorrow. I do hope you will like it and keep it until you can publish it. It was, or is, really, my swan-song in Australia on the British Empire. Just that small but important part of it, which is Victoria. I have the part MSS of half a dozen very interesting books on the B.E. as surveyed from the point of vision of one who has seen it working away busily and beautifully in New Zealand. Still, apart from that, the book is absolutely Australian in every way.

I have one favour to ask of you, however; and it is this. If WHITE TOPEES is to come back to me, I want you to send it to my private address, 11, Liverpool Street, Auckland; not to the Public Library. It is quite a big of literature, and the Chief Librarian and the staff have helped me along with so much encouragement during the writing, that I'd feel sad if it landed back on us all, bringing about a sort of emotional slump. For you know the...

MSS 177
...
... magic things that books are. They either make or mar you. But I know you will treat me sympathetically in regard to this. Anyhow, the thought that you will get it, and read it, as a fellow-Australian, gives me great happiness in turgid times like these. You know how I love our race and our immortal and beloved country. Hoping again that you will like the book, and thanking you deeply, all along for your encouraging letters, which meant to me, more than you know, I am,

Sincerely yours

MSS 179
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
22 February, 1952

Dear Eve Langley,

I was so glad to hear by your letter of January 29 that you were about to post White Topees to us. It has not yet arrived, of course, and I only hope that I have time before I leave here on March 25 to receive it and read it and write to you again. If I do not, Nan McDonald will write in my place.

I note that you would like us to return the manuscript - if we have to return it, which I hope and believe we shan't - to your private address, 11 Liverpool Street, Auckland. We may as well write to you at that address in any case. Of course, we shall not only treat the book sympathetically, but shall receive it with hope and enthusiasm. The Peapickers has left its mark on all sensitive and beauty-loving Australians who have read it - and it possessed, too, the blessed gift of humour.

124
I hope the ship carrying the manuscript does not take too long to reach Sydney.

Yours sincerely

MS arrived 25.2.52

MSS 181
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
27 February 1952

Dear Beatrice Davis,

Did you get the M.S.S. of White Topees? I sent it over early in January. And it was accompanied by a letter sent under another cover. I hope it all reached you safely.

Yours sincerely

MSS 189
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
19 March 1952

Dear Eve Langley,

Just a hurried note to say that I have read White Topees with great pleasure. It has those characteristically brilliant passages that I have come to expect from Eve Langley, but I do think it is a little long. We shall certainly want to publish it, perhaps after slight cutting if you will agree.

Nan McDonald will be writing to you in some detail about the work, and I feel sure that you will give a sympathetic hearing to her opinions. She is a brilliant editor and will be able to help a lot.

I am just about to leave the office for my trip abroad, and hope you will forgive this brief screed.

With warmest good wishes,

Yours sincerely

MSS 219
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
16 April 1952

Dear Nan McDonald,

I had a letter from Beatrice Davis, of the 27th of last month, saying that my new book WHITE TOPEES had been accepted and that she liked it very much. She said, too, that it could be published after some slight cutting, and added that you would be writing to me in some detail about the work; and that you were a brilliant editor and would be able to help a lot.

So I looked forward to your letter, but since it hasnt arrived yet, I feel I should write and see what you think about the book. Reading your poem The Colleagues in Jundyworobak I am sure of your competence as editor, and feel that you could bring an entirely new sense of editing to the work. So do please write and tell me what you think is needed. I liked the book myself. Parts of it, I really like far better than Pea-Pickers. It doesn't move as swiftly or with the same spirit, but in spite of that, its like a long clean hot Australian day to me, and so I love it. But as I was writing it, I did think, several time, “This book could do with a little editing and cutting." Lots of books issue like that.

Beatrice Davis said that she was sure that I would give your opinion a sympathetic hearing; and I only want to say that I am more than willing to let you have an absolutely free hand with the book, and just do what you will with it. That would please me very much. I was so happy to hear that Miss Davis liked the book. She has the most splendidly encouraging spirit in her letters and has helped me along magically through these last twelve months. Now, I do hope you can get to work as with a rapier and slash away at what you don’t like, or what you think is slow and holds the reader up at all, or any little thing that doesn’t feel living to you. And I shall hope to hear from you quite soon, regarding the immortal White Topees. For those days had a quality of immortality, and anything written about them, had a vision of its own, never to be recaptured.

Yours sincerely

MSS191
READERS REPORT 1
(Nan McDonald)
WHITE TOPEES
This novel, pruned and condensed, would certainly be worth publishing. It is written with Eve Langley’s characteristic brilliance and originality, and no one else could have written it. But I am afraid that no amount of editing will be able to make it as good as The Pea Pickers.

It is difficult, of course, to make an exact comparison, because The Pea Pickers, as we know it, has been cut and edited, and White Topees has not, but I think it safe to say that when all the superfluous matter in the new novel has been sheared away there would not be nearly as solid a body of good stuff left as in the earlier one. White Topees has many of the virtues of The Pea Pickers - the vivid and surprising depiction of people, things, and landscapes, the fantastic humour, the poetic intensity - but somehow there is less of them, particularly of the humour.

All this is more noticeable because White Topees is really a sequel to The Pea Pickers, with a continuation of the Gippsland setting and some of the same characters. A new flavour is given by the fact that Steve is working on a tea plantation (I suppose people have tried tea-planting in Gippsland?), but this is not altogether an improvement, for she is more or less anchored there throughout the book. The journeying of Steve and Blue in search of work gave The Pea Pickers a connecting thread, a movement forward, in the picaresque tradition, though it lacked any well-constructed plot. Deprived of that, White Topees is even more shapeless. There is also no chance to introduce the rich variety of characters met with in the earlier book. Blue has left, and there is no one to share the central place with Steve, with the result that her introspection becomes quite unbridled. Macca makes a few appearances, but his love affair (if it can be called so) with Steve is even more unsatisfactory than before. The Italians are somehow paler, and there is no one like Jim or Charlie Wallaby. ...

MSS 193

...I can’t help feeling, too, that the white-topee empire-building has been pushed into rather a false position in being allowed to monopolize (sic) the title and the ending, as though it were the central theme of the book. It is a natural enough association with a tea plantation, but just for that reason it is alien to the real core of the book. For the tea plantation, though it is an interesting and important part of the setting and story, remains strange to the Australian earth and the old Australian ways, and it is a passion for these that is the driving power in Eve Langley’s work. The heart and centre of this book, as it is of The Pea Pickers, is Australia itself. Certainly Australia is part of the British Empire, but it differs essentially in kind from the parts that are characterised by white topees and lone tea-planters in bungalows, and associations with these should be used only for contrast. They do not even take second place in the work as a whole; this belongs to Italy.

Some minor points. Some characters who appear in the Pea Pickers only under nicknames are here named in full; Edgar Buccaneer becomes Edgar Coleman, Macca is Mackinnon Howlelt. (These may be real names, if so we should have to think of libel.) There are other inconsistencies - Macca had sandy hair in P.P.; now it is auburn. Jim McLachlan is referred to in some places as an Englishman with an English face, elsewhere his face is Celtic. (His name and his red hair make the latter more likely.) There are some inaccuracies in quotations and literary allusions. Too many Italian songs are quoted in full. The page or so on Steve’s relations near the beginning is rather flat for Eve Langley, and it would be a pity to leave it there.

I think we should publish it, in a condensed form. With some writers it might be better not to accept a second novel that is very like the first and inferior to it. But in this case we may never see a third, and there are very few writers of Eve Langley’s quality - even her second best quality.

MSS 195
READERS REPORT 2
WHITE TOPEES

This second novel by Eve Langley is not equal in quality to The Pea Pickers though, if one had never read The Pea-pickers one would have hailed White Topees as a book of extraordinary character, and quite outstanding in style, imaginative power, and interpretation of scene. It is like no other book I can think of except The Pea-Pickers. Nevertheless, White Topees has faults. To begin with it is far too long for a book without a story, for a book that depends for its progress on memories recalled, ruminations, long passionate outbursts. Humour in The Pea-pickers was to be found in characterisation and often in incident. In the second book there is no one to equal the richly humorous (sic) Charlie Wallaby, for instance. The Italians, of which there are a great many, are often momentarily amusing -- very amusing, at times, -- but the author has webbed them round with so much nostalgia, so much wild love of music, that their clarity is blurred, and they often become indistinguishable from each other.

Obviously, White Topees would have to be cut before it would be ready for publication, and I think that whoever cuts it might well remove passages about Italian operas in which long excerpts are quoted in full.
It is hardly necessary to say that there are many brilliant passages of writing that positively startle one as one reads, and remain in the mind long after. I particularly cannot forget this description of an old book: “The very italics in which it was printed had the charm of fine wheat. It fell delicately into the mind and sprouted there.”

I quite agree with the writer of the previous report that the book should be accepted for publication.

N.B. I also quite agree that the emphasis on “White Topees” - the Empire Builder, the Commonwealth, etc. seems unjustified and somehow, misplaced. I feel some mention of this should be made to the author. RW

MSS 197
READERS REPORT COPY OF 191

MSS 199
Nan McD initial

MSS 183
June Langley to Beatrice Davis
n.d.

Oh Beatrice! Beatrice!,

Such news, Eve and I have met again after almost two sad and lonely years, for me at least, for a brain as rich as hers, just a sense of loss, a nostalgia for the past, for Youth......for YOUTH!

I have waited until I could walk alone without fear, and Doctor seemed more confident than I, but then I know how I feel.

By plane, it will be Blue decided, travelling long distances has been torture, to me, for years, with those fearful headaches, and car and train sickness, Eve has hardiness, stamina I have never known.

So, for the first time, on Tues, March 4th Blue took flight, a suitcase of framed drawings, and a bulging calf-skin overnight bag, with the American edition of PEAPICKERS for good company.

What an experience, utterly out of this world, or at least up above it, at a height of 2500 feet, speed 120 miles an hour, just idling, no sensation of sped, at last I could see the top of those hills without

Being dragged along, hanging on to the back of David’s belt, or

Astride my mare, with legs so numb, I couldn’t feel the saddle.

My greatest fear, the busy streets, a jolt from a hurrying passerby, and down I must go, I managed, but of those numb cramped feet, and the stiff gait, anyway it gives one a good idea of what old age has in store.

Leaving Whangarei at 4pm, one is startled out of reverie, to find we have arrived at 4.45 just 3/4 of an hour, by train this would take four or five hours. I’m thoroughly airminded now, never again will I travel any long distance, by road or rail, the fare 35/- single.

As a precaution I took a dramamine tablet, but I don’t think I would have felt ill, every breath of air, was clean, perfumed, so different to rail travel.

I know, I know, where is Eve?

The only address I knew was the Library, and that closes at 5pm, so next morning I phoned, “Miss Eve Langley, please”, “Oh you mean Mrs Clark”, “Oh you know Miss, I’m working (I think you dirtiest picker... in this paddick (sic)) I’ll come right away Eve. To think in a half hour I would see again, the most important person in my life...now that Little Mia is no more. I struggled along...those cramped feet...wooden hips, stiff gait, but at least I was within sight of Steve Hart.

Up the stone stairway, struggle, struggle, worse is to come, for on reaching the Reference Library, steep narrow stairway is pointed out to me, this must lead to the clock tower, halfway, another landing and a door is indicated. As my feet touch the boards, Eve emerges. Joon! Joon...Eve! Eve...we hug each other, ours has been a wonderful, and terrible life, and we are all that is left, of “Peapickers”.

MSS 185

...in this paddick (sic) I’ll come right away Eve. To think in a half hour I would see again, the most important person in my life...now that Little Mia is no more. I struggled along...those cramped feet...wooden hips, stiff gait, but at least I was within sight of Steve Hart.
We drink tea from vase like glasses, delude ourselves with wine biscuits, and drift down the years, the walls are books, the table is littered with them in all stages of repair, for my old mate is putting into practise an art learned in her first work at Walker and May's in Melbourne.

When I suggest selling Kaurie Mountain so that we two can depart from this country, to spend the rest of our lives in Italy—"But Joon my hob... As of old, Blue is ready to follow the Gream.

Then there is Hilary, the children, the section, a boat, too many ties whereas with me I am ready to up anchor, as long as Eve will be my fellow traveller.

My wonderful sister, the devil incarnate, but where could one find one to equal her, I am to see her that night.

I seek the haunt, near the Old Mill, where we first met Hilary, the proprietor is none other than the Legae, from whom I rented my attic in 1934. Eve lives in the past, this used to be a Nurses Home and Hilary gardened for his dinner in the thirties. Mrs Legae told me Hilary had obtained his divorce, seldom is seen now, the children come, like the modern child, when they need anything. Bisi, is like Eve (14 in July) Langley 12, Karl 10.

I did not mention the divorce of my love, she spoke as though everything was the same, I did say I would like to see the children, but I will never mention I have heard of the former. I have a home here, she may come to some day, but David is not liked "Too hard", but then the man in the street could not be expected to understand the Langleys.

Someday I hope we will be together, although David tells me, Eve thinks nothing of me, but I am now aware of the wedge the unwanted man is trying to lodge between inseparables, when I was very ill, I half believed him, now... I can see how cunning he is, and treat him accordingly, with contempt. "My room" is at the top of another spine twister, bed, books, typewriter, dishes, manuscript, "Plenty more room, at the other end of the platform". I mention dinner at the hotel, after almost a fatal collision we hurriedly depart, or "I'm coming as fast as I can", anyway it was a wonderful night, after dinner, we gravitated towards the singers in the lounge. Splendid voices, and I managed to have them sing in Italian "T'omo Surriento". We did it again the following night, my days two in all, were spent mostly with Eve, and I took my drawings to the Fellowship of Artists, for selection in a coming exhibition, may... may not, but being independent, I care not. There was a meeting on Thursday, took my drawings, could see they were not opened, so stepped forward to the President. "I want you to look at my work tell me if you are interested, if not, it wont worry me one iota, but I leave by eight tomorrow, and so will take them with me", I spread them out, everyone crowded about, "delicate...fine work...etc, etc, then. "Yes indeed, we are interested, and will do what we can for you", I hastily emptied the salt cellar. Do what you will, I still have my land. I have never had any faith in Art as a means of livelihood, Beatrice, Mia and I would never have survived on that, and I don't expect anything now. ...

MSS 187

...April 20th

Resume Beatrice Mia, and in the meantime "White Toppees" is in your hands, how happy and proud I am of mia sorella... and better still to receive the news from her, Beatrice, you are one who knows how much she means to me, although I am still uncertain of my position with her. I may enclose her letter bearing the news, also mentioning my drawings, one of which WAS exhibited, although I am content that Eve thinks much of them, and I have no intention of selling, someday Australia will have them, together with all that will then be left of the Beesknees.

I am not able to use my right hand much, and when I bend my head it feels rather, like a piece of lead on a length of cotton, so cannot tackle drawings... but I have a few years left as yet.

We were on our way into Whangarei, when the letter was collected, we are 6 miles from Post Office, and collect mail only once weekly, so are hardly in the suburbs. Doctor was the first intelligent person to hear the news, then after my injection, sought the Librarian Mr McIntosh, the title was taken, the Publishers name, and I gave him on loan my copy of four poems MORNING IN COROMANDEL.NZ... MIRANDA... and two others, the first is the most movingly beautiful poem I have ever read, and the other is sad and haunting, for to me they reveal much.

I have many of Eve's early letters, some contain strange forecasts of the years ahead, as this day, after I had departed, Steve remained at the Hop gardens, and lies after lunch (during "stringing") in the grass by the Ovens River... 1929...

"It is good, old mate-vechio comprare - to lie herein, knowing that years to come in alien lands will bring much sorrow and despair - and that here, on earth we determine our own immortality - and Feel the centuries blend and blur

In Granchester - in Granchester."
And then, "Where'll we end eh? After dearly loved Mia dies - why not Europe and Asia - together?
Two old sunburned wrinkled, headless, uncared for, uncaring pedlars or holy men - doing the Continent
as a pleasant penance? The older we grow - the more we'll come together."
Ah well, nothing will come of that I fear, but at least to be in contact once again gives me something to
live for, I have nothing else...just some land struggling independence...but NOTHING can ever take
the place of my dear ones, but one must not make the embrace too suffocating!
I would like to hear something of "White Topees" Beatrice, it would seem that the setting is Metung
...Jum Henderson...after I had gone.
Night settles on Kaurie Mountain...but I’m hanged if I can!
I send to you one photo, an untidy arrangement of Boasie boy, my mare Zingara Mare and Grey, and
lastly BLUE of PEAPICKERS, this taken after my return fight and meeting with STEVE HART.
Adio...Arriverderci...Hyvasti
Blue

MSS 203
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
1 May 1952
Dear Eve Langley,
Your letter of 16th April, asking for news of White Topees, has arrived. I am sorry I have taken so long
to write, but I was away myself for a few weeks following Beatrice Davis’s departure, and have only
just returned.
First I must thank you for your letter, and for your very generous comments on the cutting of the book. I
don’t look forward to the pruning process; it is always hard to sacrifice some of the little incidental
blossoms, though you know it will benefit the shape of the whole. I shall keep in touch with you about
what is being done; I hope you have a carbon copy to refer to.
I must thank you, too, for the great pleasure of reading the novel. We struggle through such acres of
dreary manuscripts here, that when we can plunge into one like White Topees we feel like the children
of Israel coming out of the wilderness into the land flowing with milk and honey. Of course its quality
was not a surprise to a devotee of The Pea Pickers, yet everything you write is, in the best way,
surprising. I find its essential quality in incidents like that of the turnip raid by the kangaroos and
wallabies in the old orchard, which is strange and beautiful and comical all in one.
There was one thing that struck me as needing alteration and that was the ending, the last paragraph.
Somehow is was unsatisfying - and not only to me, for it struck Beatrice and another of our readers in
the same way. So I think it is worth your consideration. I shall give you my diagnosis of the trouble, for
what it is worth. The concluding paragraph is entirely devoted to one theme or element in the novel;
which for convenience may be called the tea-plantation theme, taking in white topees, empire building,
etc. This is a very important (and very interesting) element in the novel, but in my opinion it does not
dominate the work as a whole, and therefore when it is allowed to monopolize (sic)...
MSS 223
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
19 May 1952

Dear Nan McDonald,

A thousand thanks for your praise of the book, and the Israeli milk and honey. Regarding the title White Topees: the white topee was indeed an integral part of the book of the days and the time in which the first notes for it, were taken. In fact the book began around the topee. And I thought that, for dust jackets and covers, it would simplify things greatly for years and years. Since one has at one’s command, where the artist is concerned, thousands of quite handsome heads that could fit into a solar topee and give the book the quality of birth. It makes to my mind, one long endless chain of shade and imagination from Khartoum to Kalulu; down through the years a long line of solar helmets and the great minds that have dreamed in their cool curve, the stuff that’s made the Empire. Then again, the white topee is the symbol of the British raj all over the world. To our own detriment as a sparkling and brilliant empire (India and Africa through the raj have got something we shall never have, because of the large native population) we haven’t had enough of it. And then, I suppose it is the outline of a childish remembrance; for my first (remembered) schoolmaster, Mr Goonan of Fifield, a pale handsome young man always wore a tropical silk suit and a white topee, and wherever I have been, this symbol of the raj has followed me for some obscure reason.

So I hope, really, that you hold on to the title. A red headed young policeman who I know (always wears a white topee in the hot summer here in Auckland)... hopes the same. He likes the title very much.

Now you say again that the concluding paragraph in the book is devoted to the tea plantation, the white topees and empire building to the exclusion of the Australian earth and the old Australian ways. And that is true. But in the swimming delirium of those days, the white man and the British Empire were, like George Bernard Shaw’s pole, which he called God, the only things that stood firm; for Australia in 1928, was tottering in most splendid health toward economic collapse. She was falling in classic health toward an end. And in those days, sometimes, everything seemed to vanish before one’s eyes, like chimera, all save the compleat Englishman... and God.

And as I indicate, God is the Compleat Englishman.

Transitory Australia and its set could not be relied on when set face to face with Time. Because it had only been Australia since 1600 odd, when the Spanish found it; and it has always seemed to be the most perilous of countries where Time is concerned....

MSS 225

...I have seen most terrible Englands and countries of an antiquity, royalty and richness not possible known to history, spring like mirage from the red-soil plains around Forbes and Fifield. In 1940 odd, I saw the picture The Good Earth; that which took place in China. And the two Chinese farmers arguing over a horse seemed suddenly and with the most deadly intensity, to be standing not in China, but in outback Australia. The very trees of China seemed to be metamorphosed into Australian gum-trees, and the Australian earth and Australian skies were there but millions of years in age. Regarding your selling staff and sales values I think the picture of a white man in a white topee ought to sell anything. It always has done so for the British Empire all over the world. You will criticise me, but when I was in Australia, I always used to use the Greeks to give the people of Australia form and reality. They seemed dreamlike and unreal compared to the Greeks. And I always maintained, as in The Pea Pickers, that once Greek galleys and larger ships sailed up and down our rivers and that the Greeks came out to Australia some thousands of years ago and explored the country. But probably because of its dryness could do nothing with it. But away and apart from that I hope you keep the title of White Topees. I admit that it does seem strange? away from a tea-plantation in Gippsland and go toward the Alps, leaving behind a group of sun helmeted workers; but you can do the same thing up north here in the Auckland district now; because they have had an experimental tea estate on the go for some years, and the tea from it is very good indeed. And it is so hot up North that they cant wear anything but tropical kit, so you get the same strain here as in Australia. I have a carbon copy of the book and after a very careful reading of it, I shall send over to you a list of any errata I come across if you don’t mind. I may help. Incidentally, in my next two books on Australia, I shall literally burrow I the Australian earth and Australian ways, as you like it so; and in all ways, so do I; but, alas, for autocthonous (sic) blood...the white topee was, and Jim McLachlan was, and so was the little tea estate. Give me therefore my title of that day to stave off the years.

Thank you again for your praise,

Sincerely yours,
MSS 207
Eve Langley
Poem
Octavian Agostoe Submitted/ Returned from The Bulletin, 24.6.52
Returned from Southerly 30.6.52

MSS 209
Eve Langley
Poem
Thalassa

MSS 210
Eve Langley
Poem
Miranda And A Veranda

MSS 213
Eve Langley
Poem
The Bitter Bright Red Camellias

MSS 215
Eve Langley
Poems
The Train
Lilac

MSS 217
Eve Langley
Poem
Not Far From Suva

MSS 221
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
25 July 1952
Dear Eve Langley,

Once again I must apologise for a long silence, but for the past two months I have had to drop everything and concentrate on a large and complicated work that was urgently required for production. So, unfortunately, White Topees has progressed very little since I last wrote.

Thank you for your most interesting letter. I shall read the novel again, and particularly the ending, in the light of what you have said. In the meantime, there is one thing I should like to ask about - the naming of the characters. I notice that some characters who appeared in The Pea Pickers have different or expanded names in White Topees. For instance Edgar Colman in White Topees, so far as I can remember, was always Edgar Buccaneer in The Pea Pickers. I think this might be confusing for readers. And I don’t remember Macca’s full name being given anywhere in The Pea Pickers, but it is frequently used in White Topees. By the way, are these names real or fictitious? If there are any names of living people in the book we should know so that we can make sure there are no grounds for libel action. I know that sounds ridiculous, but you would be surprised at the libels people work out from chance references in novels. Generally it is safer not to use real names. Would you let me know your ideas on this? I shall be writing again as other points arise.

Yours sincerely,

MSS 227
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
3 August 1952
Dear Miss McDonald,

I was happy to get your letter and hear of your promise to re-read the book, with an eye on the ending. Regarding the characters; it’s twenty years since I was last up Gippsland way, and I am rather foggy about them. To the best of my belief, however, I don’t think anyone of the given names lives there; but, if you feel any doubt, you could cut the surnames and give only the Christian names, as in Pea-Pickers. This, as you say, wouldn’t confuse the readers.

I am working on another book at present, called WILD AUSTRALIA. It’s quite good, and when it is finished, which will be some time next year, I shall send it over for you to read and enjoy, since I can
tell by your letters that you are like myself, a lover of the old days in Australia. And this is about them. I
must include Miss Beatrice Davis in this, for she is, as you know, another good Australian to whom I
owe so much. I hope she will soon be back from overseas.

Best wishes,
Sincerely yours,

I am enclosing a page of errata which I picked up out of White Topees. You will probably have found
many more.

Will you please thank Miss Dobson for her letter to me, to say that Southerly had taken Morning in
Coromandek? And if Miss Davis is back, will you tell her that I have dozens of inquirers in at the
Public Library, asking when Peapickers is to be brought out again. There is always a scramble for the
spare copies here and out at the branches. All the readers like it immensely, and want another lot of it as
soon as you can reprint it. Mr Barr thinks the world of it. He's the Chief Librarian; and whenever he
picks up anything about it, in either the Bulletin or other sources, he comes in and reads it to me. Even
people met casually around Auckland want to get hold of a copy of it, and I honestly think that if and
when you do bring out another edition, it ought to sell very well. Many of them like it because its
humorous, and others like the steady prose of it, and others yet, like it for a variety of reasons. If either
you or Beatrice Davis think that it could do with a bit of cutting, or pruning, in the light of the years and
what they do to literature, perhaps you might do that before setting the Pea-pickers off again. I would
like the firm of Angus and Robertson to know, anyhow, that the book is loved deeply over here and
spoken of in this country as a classic. The only complaint is why isn't it being reprinted? It is always
good to know that publishers have not worked and worried for nothing.

E.L.

Errata in White Topees
[Errata attached]

MSS 229
Eve Langley
Poem
Ode to Elizabeth on the Day of Her Coronation

MSS 231
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
25 August 1952

Dear Eve Langley,

Thank you for your letter and for the corrections for White Topees, which will be inserted in their
appropriate places. I have checked the biblical passage for page 74 and find that the word 'purple' is
not actually used, but I think the quotation is still appropriate. It is from Isaiah 63, verses 1 and 2:

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his
apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

"Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat (sic)?"

Perhaps it would be better to leave out the sentence beginning “I that speak...”, and just quote the
questions.

The passage beginning “The leaves were tipped in”, which you have revised, comes on page 384 in my
copy, not 284. I can see that the page number has been altered; I suppose that the alteration was not
transferred to your copy.

I am delighted to hear that you are working on another book and look forward to seeing it. I hope that it
will not be too long before we reprint the Pea-Pickers. Reprints are a constant problem to us. The
printing of the necessary quantity of new books and the reprinting of the many bread and butter books –
school books, cook books, technical books, and – which keeps us alive and must always be available,
give our printing works almost as much as they can do, and we cannot keep nearly as many of our
literary books in print as we should like. However, the Pea-Pickers has not been forgotten and I shall
pass on your information about the demand for it in New Zealand to those who draw up our production
programme (sic)....

MSS 233

...We expect Beatrice Davis to return in October. She has been in Italy, France, Switzerland, Holland,
and England, and when we last heard was contemplating a visit to Scotland and Ireland. I think she will
Dear Nan McDonald, I think I owe you a letter. I must thank you for your long and nice letter of Aug. 25, regarding errata. Here is one more, I think you should have. On p.225. a poem Graves Fringe, to be stated to be of the time of Hadrian, the Emperor. Not Constantine, as given. I know you will fix this up. And also, if any time, you want to change the names etc, you are at liberty to do so. For, we live in a changing world, don’t you think? I’ve been re-reading the book today and longing only, out of it, to be back in Australia. I suppose Beatrice Davis is back again. WILD AUSTRALIA is going ahead; I am half way through it now, and with what enjoyment I’ve written it. I write my books for myself, in lots of ways and love to read them again and again, and stare into them fascinated as though they were living faces. WILD AUSTRALIA is lovely fresh country opened up and all full of climate and old days. I often think that the richest life I could live in all the world would be out at my own place, COBAR, in the Waitakere Ranges, where I’ve got a number of baches (a name peculiar to this country) and a launch, all just a few feet off a green Conradly tidal creek among a million mangroves. But then there’s the background of the Public Library, bookish and atmosphere filled. You will like the name COBAR. We were there long ago in the bad old days. My father knew the spot well. I called it Cobar because it is so wet. Typical NZ fern country with tons of native bush with Maori names and I thought of Cobar baking out in the plains and wondered if there would dry the place up a bit. But it rains more than ever now. I read that there have been excavations on the banks of the Sugei Jaong in Sarawak, where pottery of the Sung dynasty, A.D. 1100-1230 has been discovered, ad early T’ang, 618 etc. In those years they say, Borneo was a Chinese trading centre. But I’ve always been sure that all Australia was once ruled by Asia, and that they had a most remarkable civilization (sic) there; a king every few miles, and a prince to an acre. Also that a very ancient British civilization (sic) ruled there, but a very long time ago. A princely race of great culture and ideals; great artists and decorators. And that all down the coast from Cape York Peninsula down to Sydney and past it, the Greeks (with the Roams and Trojans) had small flourishing ports of call, extending also to Papua. Still, nothing matters until somethings (sic) found, in the way of vase or sherd (sic) (or ancient Papyruses or ?). And it gives one a certain amount of pleasure and background, then; and it does certainly benefit the writer of the future.

I think I mentioned in a letter to you, my feeling that once China had ruled all over Australia. I had a letter from Douglas Stewart telling me that he was at Birdville in Central Australia. He says that I should write of New Zealand, especially about a place called Ratana that I know well. And this I shall do someday. Now that I have done my best imaginatively with Australia and her early colonists, I suppose I may as well give you my impressions of this country and what I imagine of its past, according to myself; and I know I’m unimportant, but I still persist, for I love the past. The language is so like that of the ancient Egyptians, and part of the Babylonian, that one is drawn to it and yet repelled; the marks of the invaders who destroyed Ur and Babylon are marked through the tongue. I Italianise the language, myself; as did a Papal Cardinal who was out here in 1937. He remarked on the strong affinity between this Maori language and the Italian. It is however, just as strongly Egyptian. When first, in 1933, I say young men, handsome, young men of the Waikato tribe, I said to myself that they were descended from this Maori language and the Italian. It is however, just as strongly Egyptian. When first, in 1933, I say an ancient British civilization (sic) ruled there, but a very long time ago. A princely race of great culture and ideals; great artists and decorators. And that all down the coast from Cape York Peninsula down to Sydney and past it, the Greeks (with the Roams and Trojans) had small flourishing ports of call, extending also to Papua. Still, nothing matters until somethings (sic) found, in the way of vase or sherd (sic) (or ancient Papyruses or ?). And it gives one a certain amount of pleasure and background, then; and it does certainly benefit the writer of the future.

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“Follow knowledge like a sinking star,” meant merely that he had come out here to take a survey of the planet Venus when we she was nearest the earth, as in the year 1942, when she was nearer the earth than she had been for some thousands of year. This makes chaotic reading, but its all been my experience in NZ and I like it, and know that it will bring something along to me in days to come; and that’s all that...
matters. I know you will be interested, too. I hope White Topees is bearing up. I must go back to Wild Australia when I have time and finish it.

Yours ever

(Above salutation on page 1 of the letter)

Recent notes in Pacific Island Monthly point to an ancient colonization of Suva and Papeete and Tahiti. I have always thought that the Roman governors had large brick forts down there, destroyed or buried under volcanos, else why the name Polynesia or Appollynesia indicating that once Apollo was worshipped there. Nesia, a form of Nescio, "I know not what!

MSS 239
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
14 November 1952

Dear Eve Langley,

When your letter arrived I had just begun to write to you. It was about my fourth attempt at a letter to you; my earlier efforts had been brought to nothing by interruptions. That has been my chief difficulty with White Topees: with Beatrice Davis away it has been almost impossible to get a clear, uninterrupted stretch of time in which to tackle the problem of cutting as a whole. It is no use peeking at it in little snippets of time; one must feel the shape of the whole book. However, I have now been through it twice ad tentatively marked it for cutting, and I shall send you the details when I have had a consultation with Beatrice on the matter. She arrived home last week and should be back at work in a few days' time, so I think we may as well have the benefit of her advice.

I am glad that you are agreeable to making the characters' names the same as in the Pea Pickers. The two books will always be taken together, and I think that many readers of the Pea Pickers would feel that something was missing if they met their old friends under different names. By the way, am I right in presuming that Billy Brooker is the same as Billy Creeker? And Steve's racehorse, Alpini II, in White Topees is very like the mare Steve bought in the Pea Pickers (p. 398). Do you think we should make it a mare in White Topees, too? I suppose Alpini would not do for a name then.

There is another point on which I am rather puzzled. It is in the scene in the old garden at Hadfields, when Macca picks the red camellias (pp. 272-80). On p. 274 Steve cries, "I love you...I love you!" and Macca replies, "I love you, too." But on p. 276, when Steve repeats "I love you", Macca replies, "I'm sorry, Steve, I can't return it. If I had loved you, I'd have come for you long age." I find it difficult to reconcile these two replies of Macca's. Perhaps I am being dense, but I should be glad if you would read the pages over and see if all is as it should be. I can see that there have been some alterations and erasures on p. 274, and perhaps some confusion has resulted. Actually, the scene...

MSS 241
...would read quite logically if it hopped from p. 274 line 2, "I love you", top. 276 line 10, "oh, to be able, etc." (In any case I think it would be better to shorten or omit the two main digressions in this scene - those on Adam Lindsay Gordon and the Black Arrow. I think they distract the reader for too long from what is happening between Steve and Macca, and weaken its impact.)

I feel that it is important to make this scene as clear-cut as possible, because it is decisive in the relationships of Steve and Macca. And that relationship has been a complex and subtle one, which needs to be defined at this point. Apart from the things I have mentioned, I think this definition has been brilliantly achieve, particularly in:

"All this talk of the past, the ghosts, the moon, the loneliness and grief..."

"Under it all, Macca, the hard earth."

That is perfect.

I hope you have been able to follow this rather involved screed. I am so glad to hear that Wild Australia is progressing. Your place, Cobar; it should certainly have had a dehydrating effect! Your ideas on Greek and Polynesian connections are fascinating, and are certainly no stranger that many things we know to be true. I was reading yesterday that the Polynesian voyagers are believed to have reached Antarctica centuries ago. All the old seafaring peoples probably penetrated much further than we know.

I shall be writing again soon. With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely

MSS 245
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
8 December 1952

Dear Nan McDonald, it was nice to hear from you. I have noted all the puzzling points. The trouble from 272-80, is a matter of inflection, Australian drifting indistinct way of thinking, of time, and of ideals. Steve says, "I love you," feeling a great gush of ideal love; then there's a wave of earthly love, and where on page 272, Macca could reply to the ideal; on page 280, he couldn't reply to the earthly. That, throughout the entire two books, is the character of Macca. He loves; he doesn't love. Steve is the same; they both love; but they don't like the flesh and marriage. I wonder if you yourself could fix this matter for me? Anything subtle could carry it over. If you can't; you will just have to let Macca on page 272, "remain silent." Just, "Macca didn't answer me. He remained silent." Billy Brooker is Billy Creeker. We called him both but mostly, Billy Brooker. Alpini is not the mare. The mare, at that time, was down on McLachlan's property at the mouth of the Tambo. So, it will have to be Alpini. II. By the way, I agree with you about hopping from p. 274. line 2 to 276. line 10. And think with you, that the Gordon and Black Arrow scene could be done without, altogether.

Why I have this inordinate love of Stevenson, I do not know. Especially at that part of the book. Here are my questions to you. Between pages 397-400 I have made reference to...

"What would happen to us all, at last? Over the Alps, for me, soon; and a year or two at Panlook, the Chinese emperor, the cynical laughing poet, as stout as Horace and as dark and cold. " I thought I should tell you that there is a hop grower, or there was a hop grower named Panlook, up over the Alps. Do you think one should use his name? Or give some other? On page 377. "Patrick Salmon" Lower down, this should read, "and a man came out from Sth Africa to stay with McLachlan and help him with the tea plantation, and his name was Time Salmon, and I felt a slight sense of recompense; and not quite such a dreadful feeling of loss. Although McLachlan insisted on calling him, "Tinned Salmon." If you think it is quite alright. And p. 39 or so. "Teddy, the dog, was an Australian terrier." Add that if you want to. Yesterday, I picked up a book that attracted me, at the Library, called PROVIDENCE PONDS. I have mentioned it in the Pea Pickers. The place outside Bairnsdale, I mean. This book by Stan Porteous is very fine. All the beloved old names of places are there, and even the Scotts (sic) of Delvin Park, whom my grand-parents knew well. I think in time, that a great line of historical novels could be built up about our Gippsland. Porteous gives all the real names of families about there, since, as he says, "in a historical novel, this is necessary." The Munros, an old family there, are in, too. But his book is placed at about 1844, and is out of my way. But it's a good book, and should take its place among the rest of the works on Gippsland. Mr Colgan of the Auckland Public Library, has asked me for all my books in manuscript. The Pea Pickers and White Topees and Wild Australia, and I shall give him the MSS when the books are settled. I am taking my carbon copy of White Topees down to the Library to have it nailed (?) and bound. I had a note some time ago from Miss Rosemary Dobson saying that my poem "Morning in Coromandel" had been taken by Southerly; but haven't seen a copy of it, yet, in any issue here. Do you think Miss Dobson would know when the poem would be likely to appear? I should be grateful if you would ask her. I am pleased to hear that Beatrice Davis is back from abroad and hope she and you will work over White Topees, to the book's advantage. Since I am taking the MSS of White Topees down to be bound, I have been looking through it, and have decided to send over to you a part that is to me, its most important part. But which, being unusual, I thought I would leave out. It is a powerful piece of writing, but since it really is my own recollection of being born, or my "continuity of being" feeling which I have kept secret for years, I felt shy about sending it to you. I have always imagined that every single soul living on this earth, has, in some small way or larger way, perhaps, had this identical feeling...of continuity of being; which is, of course, at the root of our feeling of immortality. However, I have decided to send it over and hope you will incorporate it in the book, even if you have to cut out a lot of other matter to do so. This great picture of the continuity of my being has played such an important part in my life that I should like to see it printed on a large canvass full of backgrounds and dimensions of thought. But to tell you the truth it makes me feel so ill, sometimes, as though I had not been norm, but had been found out in the bush, shanghaied, that I cannot bear to think on it for too long. And tonight, I have a bad cold; that allied to the story of my beginning tends to make me feel so sick that I shall just briefly appeal to you to let it become part of the book; so that my chest may be rid of the troublesome haunting experience, once...

MSS 247

...and for all, and I shall name you both as my good angels, if you will see that it is attended to, one way or the other. Please write and tell me your reaction to it.

Yours ever
Eve Langley
Or, as I sometimes alas, call myself...
EVIL ANGEL
However, A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR, 1953, to both of you.
Appendix 3

Manuscripts 1953

MSS 249
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
12 March 1953

Dear Eve Langley,

Once again I must explain my silence on White Topees by the fact that I have been interrupted and diverted to tiresome jobs, much less interesting but considered more urgent by the powers that be. At the moment we are all painfully involved in the upheaval caused by bringing out a new edition of the Australian Encyclopedia - a vast undertaking.

Our original intention was, as you know, to send you a detailed list of the cutting down on the MS. But since this has turned out to be numerous small cuts scattered throughout the book that method would mean sending you a long list of page a line references and giving you a tedious time tracking them down. We think, therefore, that the best plan would be for you to see it in unpaged proofs. In this way you will be able to get a better view of the all-over effect, and since the proofs will not be paged it will not be too late for you to put back anything you particularly want to stand.

Of course most of the things cut are good in themselves and cannot be sacrificed without a pang, but I don’t think the book as a whole has suffered in the process. Though for economic reasons it must be cut - costs are now so high that a novel as long as this was originally was would have to be sold at a prohibitive price - we don’t want to spoil it artistically. The main consideration governing the cutting has been the unity (and continuity) of the book. The passages omitted or greatly shortened were those that had seemed to make breaks in the book - such as narratives of events that had happened elsewhere and were not an integral part of the story, or descriptions of characters who played very little part in it. These, though often fascinating in themselves, could be detached more easily than others without leaving a hole.

The passages on opera and songs come into this group to some extent because, although they are in part an integral section of the patter, the long quotations and commentaries sometimes have that breaking-up effect on the wholeness of the book. Often a few lines are enough to convey the feeling of a song; there is no need to give more. We think, too, that there...

MSS 251

...should never be more than a few lines of Italian at a time. Some of the poems also seemed to long (not as poems, of course, but as quotations in a prose book - though prose is too dull a word for White Topees).

There are also a number of very small cuts, more in the nature of condensing them of leaving anything out.

About the “continuity of being” passage - it is strange and fascinating, and we think it should go in, but probably in a shortened form. At that point in the book it seems to make to long a digression. It is rather (?) long to be spoken by Steve, though that doesn’t matter so much. To shorten it, I suggest editing (?) On p. 413a, lines 8-20 “...which I did not recognise...” to “...my life there.”

From p. 413d, line 3 “…either new born...” to “…This, with...” on p. 433e, line 15, substituting the words “was of” to make the passage read “My next memory as I sat in the buggy between the man and the woman was of an old-fashioned plane.”

This would mean sacrificing the details of the plane trip, which would be a pity, but the passage does need simplifying as well as shortening, I think. Literal-minded readers are going to be baffled by the sudden switches of place and period (I must admit that I was confused myself at first reading) and it might be as well to reduce them if possible. For the same reason we should perhaps take out the Ben Hall part, too, though it is very food. What do you think about all this. You are the best judged of what is vital in the passage and what is not.

You will remember that we were not happy about the ending, feeling that there was not enough of Australia in it, and that you wrote explaining why it was so. We feel that most readers would probably find the same difficulty as we did, and we suggest that the last few sentences should be altered to

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include some of the phrases you used in your letter explaining the way in which the Empire theme was appropriate in the conclusion to the book as a whole. Something like this:

"His white suit and white topee gleamed in the hard bright morning sun. The white topee! I saw down the years, from Khartoum to Kalulu, the long line of solar helmets and the great minds dreaming in their cool curve, and out of their dreams making an empire. And joining themselves to that line I saw our own dreams, and the tail we had given out of ourselves through this great ideal summer, the Australian summer that we had shared together and that now was ended."

You can probably improve on this, but we think that is the type of thing we need. By the way, what do you think of *The White Topee* instead of *White Topees* as a title.

I'm afraid it may be some time before you see proofs. Our programme for the year is still undecided. Unfortunately there are a lot of books - text-books and so on - which must be out by certain dates or lose their market, and the creative books, which are timeless, usually have to wait. In the meantime, let us know your opinions on the suggestions in this letter.

It is great now that you have finished *Wild Australia* to your satisfaction. We are looking forward to seeing it.

Yours sincerely,

MSS 253
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
19 March 1953

Dear Nan McDonald, I was so happy to get your letter, and shall write a short fast note in reply, because I am off out to the bach tomorrow to do some work on the launch; caulking, putting and painting the hull with anti fouling. Thank you for all your kindness to me. Regarding the title, The White Topee. I think it is far better: Please let it be that. About the "continuity of being; I agree with you, regarding line 8, to "my life there," but if it could be done, should like, "What a magnificent country to colonize" to be in; but not if you don't wish it. And wish the Ben Hall jackeroo hut scene could be in; but oddly enough, only because of the bright kerosene lamp. I hope it will stay; but you will see. I find in my original MSS this; "I left this mans' flat and rushed down in a cab or taxi, with a friend to catch a liner, at Tilbury, the old P and O liner, "Ophir." I think that should go in too. The name of the boat is important. But I agree with you that the plane trip should not be in because of breaching up the journey. But I have found a letter in a book of Theatrical Memories of the eighties-nineties about a projected aero plane trip out to Australia in 1900-4, and should like to send you a copy of it. I have asked Mr Porter, the Reference Librarian to look it up for me again. The trip (Oscar Wilde) was with titled people. I do hope you can get the continuity in, because it gives me a large field, a big scope. But you cut away as you like. You are so right about the Italian songs and other things that I shant bother, but leave it in your capable hands. I shall enclose another ending, and see if you like it as well as you own which you sent me, I mean, which you shaped for me. I like that, myself. But read the one enclosed and see what you think of it. Knowing that you're so covered with work, I shant expect anything for a while in the way of proofs. To tell you the truth, I am up to the neck in work, myself. Wild Australia, is finished, and a good book, fast moving, fantastic, and humorous. I shall have to type it out and send you over a copy, for the sheer joy of it. But in the interim, I have started another one, *THE VICTORIANS*, and don't want to let it drop back. The Victorians, is of course, about the Victorians; those that dwell in that part. I think it will be good, too. So, I shall leave The White Topee to you.

Many thanks again for your letter,

Yours ever,

??

"Windsor" phoned re ? Sandringham. This is not important however.

I hope you can put the "continuity" in; and don't forget the old P and O boat, "OPHIR."

EL

MSS 255
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
30 April 1953

Dear Eve Langley,

Thank you very much for your letter and for the new ending for *The White Topee*. We are very pleased with it, it is just what was needed, I think, because it gathers together all the different elements in the book in a truly satisfying way.
By the way, did you receive a notice about Australian Poetry which I am editing this year? I should like to use your poem “Pegasus, Carthagus” which I took from the Bulletin. It is a charming thing and it flavour is quite different from anything else I have. But if you have any other recent poems that you think I should see would you please let me have them fairly soon.

Best wishes for you work and your novel and your boat,
Yours sincerely,

MSS 257
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
25 May 1953
Dear Nan McDonald,
I am so glad you liked the new ending. Here is the verse you want. I had two others I wanted to send. Australs. And…. Dark Blue Words on pale Blue Lines, but sent them to Douglas Stewart and didn’t get any reply, so I shall keep them, unless you particularly want them. I am sending The Snowy River, because I love it, myself, the river and the poem. The Ode above, is to be sung by a 400 hundred voice choir in the Auckland Town Hall, next week, under the baton of Mr Claude Laurie, the director the Auckland Choir. I though you might like to see it. I am at work drafting out WILD AUSTRALIA for you, and shall send it over as soon as it is finished, and see what you think of it.

Best wishes ever,
Eve Langley
Will you please pass the enclosed receipts on to you auditors? I don’t know what the date of the Southerly is. Could you tell Me?

MSS 259
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
24 June 1953
Dear Eve Langley,
This note is written in haste; I have been away in Queensland and have not yet caught up with the work that accumulated here while I was basking in the sun eating mangoes, custard apples, papaws, and peanuts. Thank you very much for sending me your poems; I enjoyed them all but I think my first choice is still “Pegasus Carthagus”. I think the opening of “The Snowy River” is magnificent, and it has some lovely lines and phrases, but as a whole poem I think “Pegasus” is better; it is the more finished piece of work, and when it came to the point I could not part with the little plum-tree horse.
The Southerly that “Morning I Coromandel” appeared in was Number Two, 1953. According to the mailing lists a copy has been sent to you; if you have not received it let me know and I shall ask them to send you another.

Yours,

MSS 261
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
3 August 1953
Dear Nan McDonald,
Thank you for your letter. I envy you Queensland days and the tropical diet. New Zealand is still wrapped in ice. I see you like the little horse of Carthage best; and I must confess I am fond of it, too. Did you see my this years collection in Jindyworobak? I liked Ibis best, myself. Thank you, I got the copy of Southerly and Coromandel looked fine, lending its colouring to Bernard O’Dowd, our great poet.

I am enclosing a copy of the Coronation Ode. Willow Macicy had hers printed on illuminated paper and sent to Her Majesty by Sir Willoughby Norrie. You will see that her has a good quality. I am on the last lap of copying out Wild Australia, and shall have it over on your desk in either September or October. I shall be interested to know what you think of it. Its second name is Bogong Centaurus; meaning a skilful horseman of the Bogongs, I think. But perhaps you may find a better title for it. I am halfway through the other book I started, now, and quite pleased with it. Anyway I shall hurry through the finished book and send it for you to read in Springtime...

Primavera!
Yours ever,
Eve Langley
The Ode was put over the air by I.YA.Auck.

MSS 291
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
1 September 1953

A Book
Wild AUSTRALIA
BY
EVE LANGLEY

MSS 267
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
23 September 1953

Dear Eve Langley,

This is just a note to let you know that Wild Australia has arrived. I am looking forward to reading it as soon as I have time. I shall be away for the next few weeks so I shan’t be able to read it properly until I return.

By the way, there was another point about The White Topee that I should have mentioned. You remember the section called “The Mistral” in which the mistral is taken to be the sea wind - as I always thought it was. Just before the manuscript went to the print I discovered that it was really not a sea wind at all but a land wind, and apparently a rather unpleasant one. After consultation with Beatrice Davis I changed the name of the section to “The Sea Wind”. I left the reference to the mistral in it, but altered it slightly making Steve explain that she has given that name to the sea wind because she feels it really should belong to it. Anyway you will see this in the proof and you can alter it if you don’t approve of it.

Did I thank you for sending the Coronation programme with your Ode? It must have been refreshing for everyone because tributes on those occasions, though sincere, are usually conventional and rather obvious, but your poem has the individual and different flavour that is in all your writing.

Australian Poetry is now out and has been quite well received so far. I must see that a copy is sent to you.

All good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Appendix 4

Manuscripts 1954

MSS 293
Shirley Tebbutt, Editorial Department, Angus and Robertson Ltd to Eve Langley
21 January 1954

Dear Miss Langley,

We are enclosing two copies of the agreement for White Topees and, if they are in order, would be glad if you would sign both copies and return one to us for our files.

Also enclosed is a questionnaire which we would like you to fill in, adding anything that you think may help our publicity for the book. We would also like a photograph of yourself if you can let us have one. All this material helps our publicity people tremendously.

Thanking you, Yours faithfully,

MSS 617
Eve Langley to Shirley Tebbutt
n.d.

Dear Miss Tebbt,

Mr Duthie, the Chief Librarian of the Auckland Public Library has witnessed my signature. I have done my best with the form to fill it in, but have nothing startling or provocative — only the same old stuff about my self, and it bores me, horribly. Hope it doesn’t bore you. Doesn’t matter though. Please send all letters care of the Auckland Public Library.

MSS [NO NUMBER]
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
6 February 1954

Dear Miss McDonald, this short note is to ask you about WILD AUSTRALIA. Have you read it, and do you like it? The Government of New Zealand has given me a grant of 300 to keep on writing more books like it. The Minister of the Government thinks a lot of it and says it is a classic contribution to the literature of the nation. Mr Pat Lawlor and Professor Blaiklock who helped toward the Literary Grant asked me to whom I sent it. I told them “To Angus and Robertson.” “It could not be in better hands,” they said. “It is in the right hands.” I hope you like the book, too. I received the agreement and have signed it and Mr Duthie, the Chief Librarian witnessed the signature and the copy I returned to A&R. I notice it is called, in the agreement, “WHITE TOPEE”, and I liked the THE. There was a form, too, which I filled in rather sparsely, but I don’t seem to have anything in my life of Australia to tell. I did my best. But if you can get anything, subsequently, out of this letter to add to the publicity, do so. I have to get a photograph, or an ordeal, rather; I didnt write, before, because I have been very busy, and perhaps you have also been working hard. I am writing five books at once, at present, and am putting good work into all of them. Their names are, YOUTH; THE REMITTANCE MAN, BANCROFT HOUSE, THE VICTORIANS and another. All of them are good. They have the bloom on them of good books. But if I get them all finished before Christmas, what a tour de force it will be. Each is to be the same length as the White Topee and the one you have also. They were the boost on them of good books. But if I get them all finished before Christmas, what a tour de force it will be. Each is to be the same length as the White Topee and the one you have also. They are looking forward to seeing The White Topee there and Gloria Rawlinson, the poet and her mother, Rosalie, who also pushed for the Literary Grant, are keen to see it. Well, I am happy when I am writing; thats all I can say. I feel healthy and immortal when I act out the part of the deus ex machina, whatever happens at last. I have shifted out to Laingholme where my bach is and am now right down again in the Fern-Tree Gullet, as in Dandenong. Laingho Inn was, in 1450, in Scotland the last outpost and stronghold of the Douglases; so that is where we end, at last. Right opposite where the old Orpheus got wrecked in the Ormsby Channel in 1864 or so; for my place over looks the Manukau Harbour. Sometimes I can see the golden bar, the dangerous wintry cruel looking sea, and I stare at it and remember the Orpheus. And on the shore, below my bach and just opposite my launch, the TEDDY, lies a graceful and beautiful log...

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...a truncated Grecian, the torso of a lovely youth, lying on his back and holding up in his hand a
great bow, with an arrow lying across it pointing to the Ormsby Channel where the wreck of the
Orpheus took place. Often I long to be able to drag it up out of the water and paint it with gold and
silver and set it up in the bush among the ferns, but I shall leave Orpheus to Thalassa, his sea. I am
having a large bach of the Scratchely type being built, standing eighteen feet high in the air; it is
like a ship, and will have a gangway running out to it for me to walk across to get into it. And I
have changed the name of the place. For I have called it Cobar until it is cracked open with heat
and we have had no rain for months now. So it is now Mistral. Or La Mistral. But the “La”, I loathe
so I may take that away and call it just Misstral. For “La Mistral” makes me think of a flagship,
Napoleon may have owned, and I see it standing off the coast, sadly waiting for Nelson, with all
hands on board. I wish I could have written something interesting for the form, but have nothing
interesting, really. I also forgot to fill in a synopsis of the novel, and am sorry. I only know that I
work at the Auckland Public Library, that my three children, Bisi, Langley and Karl Marx are all at
College; at Otahuhu College. That I was married to Hilary Clark, the artist, the nephew of Russell
Clark. The wellknown (sic) New Zealand artist. But then it is a familiar name just as everything in
the world is, these days, familiar. We are not married now. Chiefly because, I don’t like marriage
and world rather live along and write. My sister, June, who has a sheep farm up north, is a water
colorist and has had a few exhibitions. The Langleys have only had one notable member of the
family whom I can remember, and that was Darcy Langley, an oarsman, of Oxford, or in Oxford. I
heard of him when we were in Molong or Fifield, but cant remember much about him. Thomas
Davidson, the grandfather, was a Gippsland grazier. Except for holding on to large tracts of land, I
cant think of anything outstanding that they did. Arthur Langley was well educated; his stepfather
Decimus Lamb had had a hotel in Sale, Gippsland and Arthur was related to the once famous
“Fatty” Lamb, the bicycle rider. So, it is a dull background but since its Australian, it is, in its way,
momentous, because it is part of the continent, and nothing is ever small in Australia. Regarding
myself, the early years were spent in NSW around Forbes and later in Dandenong and Melbourne
and Gippsland. And that’s all. Over here, I was free-lancing for years, but except for marriage and
children, and now a touch of fern-fever, I cant think of anything wonderful. To myself, really, I
don’t seem to be any good for publicity. If I had done the most wonderful thing in the whole world,
I still, to my own mind, wouldn’t be any good for publicity. Perhaps because there is no such thing,
really, as a public....yet?

yours ever

MSS 271
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
22 March 22 1954

Please address all mail care of the PUBLIC LIBRARY. Only

Dear Nan McDonald,

Its six months since I sent Wild Australia over to you, and I haven’t heard from you about it at all. I
do hope you like it. Please write and tell me, soon, wont you? For I’ve suddenly begun to worry
about the book. During the long hot drought we have had over here I’ve (sic) haven’t bothered, for
I’ve had this new bach of mine to think of and finally shift up into and arrange. But now Autumnns
come and I start to change and worry about my leaves; those that you have. I do hope you will
write and let me know at once what x...I wrote the book FOR you and with you in mind constantly
and I did so want you to like it and enjoy dear old Charles Wallaby once more. I love him so much
myself, dear fellow that he was, that I want all the world, I supposed, to do the same. You just want
to think of it all all (sic) as a tour de force of humor (sic) entirely and help me along, if you can,
with the rest of my books, the whole five of them, that are really, half waiting on you to be written.
DO write and tell me what you think of Australia Furioso, as I call it now and then. That’s just a
change from Wilde Australia. At the library, what between being painted silver and primrose and
blue it’s the walls in the reference department, although I think lilac and green would have been
beautiful with either gold or silver for the railings, and working among the books and waiting
patiently for The White Topee’s proofs one feels sad. My woes are the Library’s woes, and many
and patient and sad are the inquiries regarding Wilde Australia and The White Topee from Mr
Duthie, the Chief-Librarian and Mr Colgan, his Deputy. We sadly and with sorrowful patience wait
for our own book to arrive. For when one works on a staff with people, they have one’s interests at
heart, and a letter from Angus and Robertson seems suddenly to light and fill the place full of the
fire of genius and happiness, and then we really do live and have a fresh interest in life. At present
we are stagnantly lying in wallowing pools awaiting word from you regarding the ubiquitous Wild
Australia. So I must beg you on my golden knees to send word of the book I sent to you so long
ago, O Heraclite os, Heraclites of the Antipodes. I hope you are not ill or gone away? Anyhow you will be sure to write at last and deliver us from our agony. I have my five books I run along as in an octave, to write, a page here and there adds to them, but at present, I have no light, for I cannot get either electrician or plumber to make a move out here, yet, although I know they will be along on the wettest day in winter. The Auckland City Council always lays the water on on the wettest day in winter. I suppose the Waitemata Electric Power Board will also only consent to put the lines into the bach when both the heavens and the Thames are on fire. But, anyhow, I shall feel as dead in the head as a doornail until I hear from you. Then I can start off again. So please write, wont you? I enclose two photographs, and could you give them to Shirely Tebbut of the Editorial Dept, please? One was taken recently up at Rotorua, myself standing on a fuming geyser with the Maori guide, Rangi. Two strangers took this. The other was taken by a young fellow named Clibborn down at Pakarakaiki, one who can play a guitar sublimely and something of his own inscrutable lute-playing soul, has, I think, crept into it, for it is more like me as I was in Australia than any other I have. Ah well, except for saying that I sent back to you the publishers agreement and that I wait on you for word on the book, what can I say? Niente. Save "farewell", addio. The hot day wanes at last and tomorrow I am off back to Library, leaving behind me the Orpheus in its Ormsby Channel. I always feel cold, sad, depressed and sick when I am not writing.

Best wishes,
yours ever
Eve Langley

Please write as soon as you get those photos to let me know that they arrived safely. I am sending them under register for safety’s sake. E.L.

Please write soon and let me know about Wild Australia, wont you!! Keep the photographs I am sending you. I think publishers should have all their Rogue’s Gallery filled, don’t you? and the geyser will fill it to repletion. (?)

MSS 277
Eve Langley to Shirley Tebbutt
30 March 1954

Dear Miss Tebbutt, I posted Nan McDonald two photos of myself under a registered envelope on Friday last. And told her to give them to you at once. Has she gone away? Or is she sick? I mailed to her my other book Wild Australia, but have not heard from her except to say that she had received it and would read it. I cannot understand her long, long silence. Will you please ask her to write at once? I am anxious about the book. These two photos ought to make splendid publicity. If I could handle the publicity myself, I’d make a good job of it. Look at the utterly Corsican rock and Ajaccio pumice...

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...factory on the island; Corsicans had 13th century pearl culture (sic) the back of the Bonapartish face in the Clibborn photo, that with the pearly. A thousand tales in it. And left out of it was a pipe like a piece of artillery on the island. You could put that in; it would fit in with the del Vergine scene at Kalimnos. Then the one up at Rotorua with Rangi, has all the strangulated blackness of the Oscar Wilde story in it, and half old London trying out from behind the bloated whisky sodden face of a middle aged man. All thats in Wild Australia. By Jove, I wish I could do the publicity! My soul may be back in the 80’s but my brains right here in this century! Ah, to be able to do a spot of publicity on my most,...

[MSS ???]

...fantastic self! All modern literature links up with my book. I have another good photo taken by a Mr W.H., which I should like you to have, and am having a full length photo in fur coat and face taken tomorrow. Ah, to be able to do the job of publicity myself! But still, you know best, where modern processes are concerned I am ignorant. There is a story behind the geyser photo, too. However, please yourself; here is night falling, and I must be off, truly yours.

Eve Langley

NB. If the registered letter comes to your office and Miss McDonald is not there, if she has gone away, you should open the letter and take the photos out and use them. Do not return them to me. Keep them. I shall send over another lot soon. EL.
MSS 283
You could address the letter, Oscar Wilde, care of the Auckland Public Library. Auckland. I get quite a number of business letters come to me under that name and address. Or to the vile Evil Angeli, as usual.

The missive L’Anglais, as I call it. The English letter. The Miss Eve Langley....

MSS 289
...Eve Langley
I am enclosing some poems for the anthology and hope to dear from Miss McDonald soon. Re the publicity; you could find out something about that complicated piece of artillery. Chas. Bonaparte had outside his house in Ajacio in 1780-90. Probably find it in old gunnery lists such as Whitworths. This could go in with White Topee and the rifles. See? For Wild Australia, and Hotham, ending up on the geyser at Whaka, you could take Ld....’s book “In High Altitudes.” Publd 1864 or so, and a relative work Ld Hotham was engaged on at the same time. I think he discarded it; but it was relative to volcanology I which he or a friend of his was interested. That’s how I like to work things. Just that much gives you an interest in both portrait and book. Portraits had taken last week, are in front of old Willis’s Rooms, etc.

Eve Langley

MSS 295
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
8 April 1954

Dear Eve Langley,

I am very sorry to have taken so long to write to you, but I have been waiting for the final decision to be made about Wild Australia, and there has been so much discussion, with different people reading the MS and giving opinions, that it has taken months. And after all that, I am afraid I must disappoint you by telling you that the final decision is against publication. Everyone who has read it agrees that it has splendid passages in it, much that is brilliant and compelling, but that the book as a whole is definitely not as good as The White Tipee or The Pea Pickers. We do not think it would benefit your literary reputation (or future sales) to have a book noticeably less successful than its predecessor following in such quick succession.

The main criticism of Wild Australia made by all readers, including myself, is that it needs a stronger thread of story, a more definite plot, to hold it together. There are some excellent parts, but they are not integrated into a satisfactory whole. And Steve’s imaginative flights, delightful though they are, are often too irrelevant to occupy as much space, in proportion to the rest of the book, as they do.

Another difficulty is the Oscar Wilde theme, which we feel would be altogether too strange for the majority of readers. We were rather dubious about its introduction into White Topee, but there it occupies only a short space; in Wild Australia it is a much bigger part. Please don’t think that we want you to write down to the lowest level of the intelligence of the reading public, but with production costs as high as they are we can’t afford to limit the circle of potential readers too drastically. A writer who has lived with an idea and developed it and become thoroughly familiar with it often fails to realize how baffling it can be if it is presented without explanation to a reader, even an intelligent and sympathetic reader, who has not shared in these processes....

MSS 297
...Of course there was a great deal in the book that I enjoyed (as did everyone else who read it). It was a joy to meet Charlie Wallaby and his mother again; I have always loved them. Steve’s memories of the winter spent in their house are haunting and fascinating. And your descriptions of scenery, especially of the Alps, are, as always, superb. These are things too hood to be lost; perhaps one day you will revise the manuscript, or incorporate some of the material in another book. Anyway, we shall post the manuscript back to you and you can think it over.

The photographs have been safely passed on to Miss Tebbutt for filing. Thankyou for sending them. The proof-reading department will be sending you proofs of White Topee this week. I am sorry about that “The” being dropped out of the title. I liked it, too, and did not know it had been altered until you asked about it and I made inquiries. By that time the blocks for the jacket had been made, and an alteration would have been most expensive. The sales staff considers the title is better without the “The”, but I should have been told so that I could have referred it to you. It is
one of those muddles that sometimes occur as a book goes from one department to another in the process of publishing, and everyone thinks someone else has been informed of what is happening.

All good wishes for yourself and for the work in progress.

Yours sincerely,

MSS 269
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
12 April 1954

Dear Nan McDonald, I feel very ill. You are sending WILD AUSTRALIA back to me. I can scarcely believe (sic) it. I was banking on the book...thought I’d be able to leave the Library soon and with the money the Govt gave me, come out here and write, more books, like it. For it clears my brain to write them. Nan McDonald, DEAR Nan McDonald, I AM OSCAR WILDE. AND YOU’RE KILLING ME (sic). KILLING ME. Nan McDonald, dear Nan, please believe with you entire heat (crossed out) heart and soul that it is I OSCAR WILDE, still labouring and swinging about in the agony of my death pangs of fifty years ago who is imploring and praying you to believe (sic) that the whole story is true. TRUE. I’m ill tonight. God, if you only knew the whole story. And when I get this book back, I’ll be doomed again. And, look, Nan, its no use talking about the Mental Hospital, because I told Dr Stevens there straight out (sic), that I was OSCAR WILDE, and they kicked me straight out. And Dr even asked me how long I was in Australia, out from England, and believed me. And I hate being Oscar Wilde, because NO ONE WANTS OSCAR WILDE, EVER. O God, I feel ill tonight. My brain is whirling in horrid chaos. Dear Nan, please reconsider your most awful decision and don’t send that book. O, I know what death is now. I’m typing this in the dark, for I’ve no light yet. O, I know what Death is now. I thought I knew at Minildea what it was. But when I got your letter, and read it, then, at last, I knew what death was. Now my memory is failing in me, failing in me, down to sheer hopelessness. But Nan, will you for Gods sake, read, read and do believe that it is me, OSCAR WILDE, unfortunate Oscar Wilde that is writing. O, God, if you only knew my dire and dreadful need of help. I’m sick, and Nan, I’m standing all day miserably binding books in the Auckland Public Library the same as I did in Reading Goal?. I wont spell it the right way. I’ll spell it like goals over at Bagley field. And I really feel soothed by the book binding, and like it, just as I used to. But only when you write to me your gracious and lovely letters, dear creature. You gave me back my life. O God, don’t turn me down with that book. Do...please do your best for me, or I’m lost. I’m sick, and my brain and my memory are in a shocking condition, but I’m making a fight to be myself all the way through. Hospital is of no use. They kicked me out. They hated seeing me among the women there. I’m an hermaphrodite, and I suffer shocking pain day in and day out with twisted organs that almost kill me with pain. But I just endure and live purely and cleanly. And...because I’m Oscar Wilde, I had to struggle to dreadfully to get married, for no one wants Oscar Wilde. And I was so grateful to be married. But the hideous secret of myself lay between us and poor Hilary Clark (I married him as it were, on the Edward Clark line) was so glad to go and get married to a woman. By Jove, O was glad too. Poor fellow. Don’t take any notice of my peculiar way of writing. It’s the slangy mid Victorian in me. O God, if you don’t believe in me, Nan, I shall just have to plow on...TILL THE YEAR 2000, ALONE IN AGONY. But don’t you see...if I can only get my writings out of me, out of my soul and into sympathetic hands, I am well, and feel marvellous. Nan McDonald, CANT YOU HELP ME? O God, I groan in agony when, I think that youre going to send that book back. O God, do promise...do promise that you will help me. O, God, if you don’t I’ll just have to stagger on day after day, in agony until at last, some one believes in me. When I landed in Sydney, Nan, I went on the drink...may God strike me down to the earth dead this minute for ever if I am lying to you...I drank everything I could lay my hands on, to forget Lord Alfred Douglas. I still loved him. O drank metho and whisky galore at Killens station and did myself (sic) in. Shrank from a tall man of about 14 stone to a mere wasted child and like the Forbes Semple case turned into a girl... O, God, Im in Hell. I drank and drank...metho. Mostly. The drink fascinated fascinated (sic) me. So cold, so clear, so royal a drink, so purple and like the robe of an emperor. O, I’m done for if you wont believe me. Its me, Nan, OSCAR WILDE. Dumbly standing before you in agony, imploring you. Through the dreadful MAIDEN that covers, me, to believe that it is I, Poor Oscar Wilde. Nan, don’t send that book back. Don’t send it back.

Yours ever,

Oscar Wilde.

Oscar

For Gods sake reply sympathetically to me.
Don’t suppress me, just see if you can ease my brain a little my writing even very discreetly. I don’t want to know anything about the children. I’m in hell. I only want to write and get enough, very little, really, money.

Nan, don’t be too hard on me. I’m ill…Oscar.

I beg you on my knees not to let this letter interfere with the publication of The White Topee. I’d retract all to get it published…because of my tortured memory, and my sick soul.

Help, help, help. Oscar

N.B. The White Topee does marvellously well at the Library, they think the Oscar Wilde part is best of all. Frassine fine!

O.W.

MSS 275
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
13 April 1954

Dear Nan McDonald, further to last nights letter, I must add that I was very ill during the night and today, acting on the advice of my physician, Dr Reg Dudding of Northcote, whom I consulted, and my solicitor, Mr. L.E. Mellsop, I have had drawn up a deed poll, changing my name irrevocably from Eve Langley to Oscar Wilde. So that matter is finished with. And even if you exclaim on reading last nights letter, “That person could not POSSIBLY be Oscar Wilde!” You will now have to give in and admit. ‘That person, however, IS NOW Oscar Wilde.’ And if I ever let go of the name, may I be sunk, for I’ll deserve it. By the way, my sister June, who knows the story, told me or advised me when I sent Wild Australia over to you, to tell you the truth. Now, please, let us be awfully calm about the change of the name. It is for literary purposes only, and yet again, it is not for literary purposes either. It is for health reasons, mainly. DONT let it interfere at all with the publication of White Topees. Don’t let it influence your judgement about coming books. For, having declared myself, I am as old a warrior as any one going, and shall just stick to the Australian stuff…that you, I know, love so much. Every book hereafter will be utterly Steve and saturated with the atmosphere of the country I love, Australia. Please remember that. For having gained my point I am more than satisfied. My rejection of further books, which will be all rather in negation of Oscar Wilde, in a way, will not hurt me or make me sick anymore (sic). And let us keep to the name of Eve Langley in the White Topees, and if you wish it, in all the other books too.

I don’t see why I should object really at all, in fact I am delighted to think that you like it and will continue to use it, for may I add, with a rather ironic laugh, Eve Langley is not my name either. But I love the name as much as you do. However, for reasons which will become more apparent to you as the years roll on…I rather lean on Oscar Wilde, and acting on the advice of Dr Dudding and Mr Mellsop. I have consented to change my name, for ever, to Oscar Wilde. Please, write to me and tell me that you understand it all. I have consulted Mr Duthie, the Chief Librarian and he advised the same course; adding that my mail could come to the Public Library so addressed and that he would be both interested and amused to see how I got on in the publishing world. So just let us take this as a quite too ordinary affair and you do your best for White Topees, of which you have made a marvellous job, a lovely thing, really it has become under your hands and I thank you again and again for it. And when it is published, dont bother about any publicity for the Oscar Wilde side of me. Let us not bother about it. It will be a long uphill fight, but I shall get somewhere with it. Anyhow, don’t bother about it, at all. I mean, the mere changing of one’s name by deed poll can have no interest for one’s publisher at all, if one sticks to the Eve Langley for the title page. Anyhow, let us, like Charlie Wallaby, laugh about it and forget. It will only come in handy when I get a rejection slip, or my verse is returned to Oscar Wilde,

Care of the Staff,
Auckland Public Library.
with the Chief librarians full consent. Do please write soon and say you understand,

Yours ever,

I shall send you a copy of the Deed Poll after Easter and you could file it. Don’t put Miss on the envelope. Just Oscar Wilde.

LEGALLY AND BY DEED POLL
Oscar Wilde
Wednesday
N.B. The DEED POLL was made out today, the 14th, and signed and sealed. And I am now no longer Eve Langley, but Oscar Wilde. I am so sorry, Miss McDonald, to be troubling you with all this, but I can’t take it from you, the return of Wild Australia, I mean. As Oscar Wilde I can take anything and the rottenest rebuff and disappointment this world holds and remain in myself inviolate, free, white and twentyone, with not a care in the world. But as Eve Langley I just collapse at the first blow into a vomiting fainting mass of death. I vomited for two days after getting your letter. Fixed up the Deed Poll and came home and ate and slept like a child. Please don’t go me too hard, will you? “Write to me and be as kind as you can and let us see if we can come to some understanding and terms regarding the whole matter. Say to the other members of the staff, that I cant stand up to it and have had to be Oscar Wilde in order to survive. I will be glad if you understand finally that I just want to write my books, at your wish, under the name of Eve Langley and get my knockbacks and rejects as Oscar Wilde. Oscar can take it, always remember that. Eve,... cant. Cant take anything.

Write soon OW...

MSS 287

...NB. I gave my copy of Wild Australia and White Topees over to my red haired constable friend to read, recently. His name is Constable Jim McDonald. Another McDonald, like you. He read them through, gave them back, read your letter, and said, “Why, whats she got against them? Whats wrong with the books? I think they’re great. Especially those dance hall scenes at the hops. The Wilson sisters from Happy Valley are luscious. Tell her from me, “Miss McDonald, you don’t know a good book when you read one, if you turn down Wild Australia.” And 50,000 policemen can’t be wrong. If a common policeman can understand it I can’t understand how these fancy imaginary readers of yours should be knocked to the ground by it....

MSS 281

I am returning the proofs of WHITE TOPEES with this letter. I have corrected them hastily, but have no light on. Getting it on the 26th of this month. Those who read the Oscar Wilde passages in the WHITE TOPEES couldn’t understand how you could refer to them as dubious. Of course, up at the LIBRARY, they know me and work with me all day and they are so used to me and my ways that they just don’t think anything of such a passage, such a story. They’ve heard it all before from me, because I often retail [sic] it and the James Whistler stories over the, [fragment. no MSS number] morning tea cups in the staff-room, and they are so used to it all, that they cant understand how you can bother picking it out as dubious. Its only part of my life to them. And punish me anyway you like, but do, for Gods sake bring out WHITE TOPEES, and leave in the Oscar Wilde part, because, its different. Why other writers can write what they like, and why I CAN’T, I don’t know. Like the Library staff I’m dashed if I can see anything strange or dubious about that Oscar Wilde passage. The entire book though beautiful, is not to my mind anything to make people yell out with horror or outrage. I don’t think anyone would take the trouble to even criticise it adversely. And the same may be said of WILD AUSTRALIA. Its such a harmless book....

MSS 285

...Yes; Wild Australia is an utterly harmless book. And when you complain to me that it has no plot or story in it, I could reply that any intelligent and understanding reader would say, “My God, and its supposed to be Oscar Wilde still alive and wandering over the face of Australia as a pea picker and hop picker! For God’s sake isn’t that story enough...plot enough for anyone? Why, there’s no living writer since the beginning of literature who has ever thought out such a plot, such a story and been able to carry it out with vivacity! That’s what the Library staff say, anyhow. Ah. No I’m as worldly wise as yourself. If I had been the offspring of a [fragment]titled and wealthy man, another Banker Bartholdy’s son...ah, what a harvest of recognition I should now be reaping! But if Eve Langley the “daughter” of an Australian couple writes such a book, you, who are really kind, have to be careful. So, this day Eve Died. I slew her; not with a sword, nor with a kiss.. but with a sheet of paper...A DEED POLL. Far back in my mind I hear a sad voice crying down in the East End in 1868. “POLL! O, my Polly, aint it dreadful to think that we’ve got nothing to eat, “before the poor maternal scrap of humanity went out to get shirts to sew and finding them not, cast her starved body into the Thames. The Deed Poll. The Deep Polle. “O, my Polly, aint it dreadful to think that we’ve got nothing to eat.” And with the Deed Polle, today I slew Eve Langley before she could slay me. And as for Steve’s flights of fancy...Ah, well, I was STEVE once, poor brute, she loved Australia. But died in me when I came over here, Anyhow, don’t you punish me by refusing to turn out White Topees, and if I’ve said anything that’s hurt you, please forgive me, and I, myself apologise down to the very earth. Cara, perdonami!
Dear Miss McDonald,

Herewith enclosed the Deed Poll and a single copy. Would you please look over both and keep the Copy for filing purposes? I should like you to return the original Deed as soon as you can, because I have to take it down to the Electoral Office in High Street, to have my name entered on the Electoral Rolls before the General Election comes along. The Deed Poll has also to go down to the Bank of Australasia. The Bank was consulted beforehand and agreed, but wish you to see the Deed before alteration of the Account.

I am,

truly yours,

Oscar Wilde

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Dear Miss McDonald, (sic)

I have mailed to Miss McDonald, three studio portraits, those I mentioned to you. She will hand them to you and you could file them, together with the Copy of the Deed Poll, which I am sending, too. Regarding these portraits, I thought I should give you a rough and hurried reference to the fact that they lead up to the writing of WHITE TOPEE. I have numbered the portraits.

No. 1 is sort of a composite of the young Mikado of Japan in 1868; he is wearing the fur coat and carrying the stick, these two being the official symbols of office of his No Mia, or uncles, or Prime Ministers. This Mikado was shareholder in the Indian Tea Planters Combination in London and had an office there. This office brought out a brand of tea called White Topee Tea, and it was very popular for awhile. A manager or clerk named Waring thought of the name.

No. 2 is the same form of composite of Sir J.P. Wilde, the eminent judge, but when he was younger. The lilac spray behind him and the seam running under his feet indicate the walk he is taking to one of the old London Law Courts, at evening, under which ran Old Sinister Street. It ran to the Law Court, and under it and out again. It was quite plain and much used in 1730 or so but covered and grown over so that in 1868 all that remained of it was a long thin line of stone and pitch and a few lilac bushes outlining it. Opposite where he stands was an old red wall, very high on which notices were placarded. In this instance we suppose Sir. J.P. Wilde to be standing staring at some workmen at twilight putting up an illuminated or phosphorous notice for White Topee Tea. Out of this perhaps rose the cases following on that of Waring v Waring, in which Sir J.I. Wilde gave judgement.

No. 3 Is that of a well known London identity, Prince Soltykiff in 1854 outside Willis's Rooms and also of Monsieur Le Baron……and the Marquis Ramolini (an offshoot from the family of Letty Ramolini) but this is a trifle vague, and except for the fact that there was a salon at Willis's Rooms where you could have your photo taken in those days and that White Topee Tea was sold and drunk there, is not much of interest in it. Except that Prince Soltykiff was attached to the Imperial Court in Moscow and ? he and the Baron brought about French-Indo-China through The Tea Planters Combination, I can't think of anything very interesting that they ever did. Save that perhaps they drank White Topee Tea and it was seeped into the portraits, and that I have written a book called White Topee which I hope will eventually seep into the booksellers. I received you note acknowledging the poems. I know you will be busy, so don't bother to reply to this. Just put it in with the portraits, because all the people I have mentioned above were alive at that time.

Yours truly,

Oscar Wilde
Here are the three studio portraits I had taken last week. You could give them to Miss Tebbut (sic) and tell her to keep them; file them, use them if she wishes to. I am mailing you a copy of the Deed Poll under another cover. And I have just finished my new book BANCROFT HOUSE, and shall send it over to you within a fortnight.

Sincerely yours,
Oscar Wilde

MSS 307
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
17 May 1954

Dear Eve Langley,

I am sorry that you were so upset by our decision not to publish Wild Australia. Naturally it is very disappointing for you, but I think you are seeing it as a greater calamity than it really is. After all, almost every writer has a book rejected at some stage or another, it certainly does not mean that we have lost faith in your work. We should not have undertaken two of your books if we did not have faith in you as a writer, and we look forward to publishing more in the future. It is just that, in our opinion, Wild Australia, is not as good as The Pea-Pickers or White Topee and we do not think we could make a success of publishing it. A failure would be good neither for you nor for us. You must realize (sic) that with production costs as they are now it costs thousands of pounds to publish an edition of a book, and unless 5,000 or 6,000 copies can be sold a publisher cannot recover what he has spent.

Of course, we may be making a mistake about the book, it would not be the first time publishers have been wrong, but we have given it our best consideration and we can only go by what judgment we have. In any case, our decision does not mean that Wild Australia will never be published, if you are right about it and we are wrong it will certainly be published by someone some day. In the meantime it will have helped in the development of your writing and will make its contribution to the quality of your next book, which I hope you are working on now.

Incidentally, you credit me with being a much more influential person than I am when you imply that I can decide what is or is not to be published. My opinion is only one of several that are considered by the Publishing Committee before the final decision is made. And, of course, besides opinions on the literary quality of a manuscript problems of production and finance have to be considered...

MSS 309

...I am glad you were pleased with the White Topee proofs. It read well as a manuscript, but a good thing always seems even better in print, I think. We all look forward to seeing it in its final form.

All good wishes,
Yours sincerely,

MSS 311
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
24 May 1954

Dear Miss McDonald,

I am sending over under a separate registered cover my new book, “BANCROFT HOUSE”. I hope you will like it. It is simple in form. Just shows you how Steve came to Bancroft House first, then went away, came back and got to live there for some time. Nothing difficult in it. Hope it is not too plotless or threadless; just there wasn’t any plot of thread at all in the Peapickers or White Topee; just a straight out recital of a pea pickers days. Very little plot in the life of a pea picker. The longer it is the less the plot. Now, if you take this book, you could quite easily strike out anything you don’t like. Its that type of book. The flow of it, isn’t like Wild Australia, at all. Quite different. Its just Steve and her doings at Bancroft House. Anything in it you don’t like just strike out. This is the first draft I am sending over to you. I know you’ll look after it carefully. If you want to take it, send me word or the MSS back and Ill be glad to type it out for you like the rest. It will be a job of work id like. But I thought I’d send it over to you, the first draft without all the long wait and work of typing it out and then finding you didn’t like it. In this case, if the whole satisfies you, you could take it, and then advise me regarding the minor faults and I could work them out. Nothing complex about this book, at all. Look after it anyhow, because its all my memory and I value it because those days are gone forever.
I got your letter and was glad to read it. Well, about Wild Australia. You say you can't publish it at present. Well, I only thought perhaps you could store it for me if you can't do anything with it at present. I lose things as fast as I pick them up, and I worry about a fire out here in the ranges, getting on to my draft of WA, so if you could keep it for me in a safe place I could be sure it was alright. That's why I sent you a draft of the Deed; I hope you'll file it. Otherwise in ten years more it might be floating around on one of the back beaches. I can't seem to hold on to anything.

Everything goes with me. I must thank you again for the proofs of White Topee. Are you working on publishing it now? We hope to see it soon in the library, anyhow. To fill in the time, Mr Colgan, the Deputy Librarian has handed me his copy of the Ballad of Reading Gaol to autograph. I'm getting on in the world. Now, don't you take any notice of my jokes. For Mr Colgan and I do nothing all day but laugh and make jokes about things. He is worse than Charlie Willoughby.

Please remember for ever about me, that I am a born humorist. You must know that. I know you are, too. All Australians are nothing but humorists. But still you are my mainstay because you are my influence in the publishing world. And I think a lot of you. Well, anyhow, you did great work on White Topee, and I only hope and pray on my knees, again, that you will let the incident at Minildra in 1904 stand. Its harmless. And Mr Bond, one of the librarians who read it, thinks its great...different...never met with before. I praise that particular piece and praise it; I also hope to heaven you leave it in the book Please (sic) do. It reads grandly. All my poems look so lovely that I want more of them in; the Italian songs look fine and the rest of the book looks so strangely fascinating that it brings back old days the best days of all. BUT...where is JIM? I saw that you hadn't put Jim in? Why isn't Jim in? Jim who took the horses up to the Ten Mile? I feel I can't do without Jim.

I put a note on the proofs to that effect and do hope you had mercy on me and put Jim in; for without him, I feel lost. Anyhow, the proofs looked fine. I do hope were to get the book soon. I hope it will be alright. And then, I hope you can keep Wild Australia too, and care for it, until you think you could publish it. It seems to be the mixture of the two people that makes you hesitate; but it was such a frightfully dead and dull year in the story and so ignoble in a fashion that I had to drag in the past, a form of art I fear and loathe above all things. But it made the book a thing of eternal beauty to me when I had finished it and I was glad. I only feel like dragging in the past when I feel a grave weakness in the racial structure of my story; when national character fails, I feel I must, out of sympathy with humanity, draw in the nobler people of the past, and no matter what the general opinion is regarding this, the general impression, is at last, one of nobility and a sense of grandeur. I do hope that you can store Wild Australia for me until you feel you could publish it. I should like to leave it with you for I have a fondness for you, Australian as you are, and the only Australian publishers, that I could NEVER have for English publishers. In fact, I should never, and have never, ever dreamt of offering my work to any English publisher. I don't even like the look of their books. But my proofs when they come from you have an odd yet undeniable look of the eighties about them that appeals and strikes one as strange; you would think, in fact, that you had turned them out and printed them around about 1900 or so, and it is this 'eighty-ish look about those proofs that makes me feel at home and happy. The proofs of Pea Pickers look the same...as though printed in 1899 or 1900. I don't know how you achieve this magic, but it is you secret and I don't suppose you will let a FRAGMENT of it escape you. Now, don't take me seriously, Miss McDonald, because you know, I laugh and laugh all the time I am writing to you; for life is an eternal jest. I hope anyhow to get White Topee soon. Anyhow, this long page merely means that I am trying to remember something I have forgotten to put in: I shall remember when the letter is gone. JIM AND MINNILDRA prey on my mind now. I hope both get in safely into White Topee. And I sent over some photos to you to give to Miss Tebbut, and I hope she likes them. Also...the Deed, which I sent to you to had to Miss Tebbut. I hope you will remind her to send the Original Deed back to me as soon as she can for the Electoral Rolls and other things. Ah now I remember what it is I want to say! It is...Don't let me wait for EIGHT months before you give me the verdict regarding Bancroft House! Be more merciful. There is nothing in the book to require a tribunal this time. It is just a simple pastoral. You should be able to let me know within a few weeks, as Miss Beatrice Davis did with White Topee. Not eight months. Dio mio...forse consunto. I shall be consumed; forse consunto. Hoping that you are now publishing the White Topee and that you will like Bancroft House,

I am
Truly yours,
EVE LANGLEY

NB. I hope you can keep Wild Australia for me, stored safely, for awhile, since you add that you couldn't publish it at present. Why not hold on to it, to help me? I forgot the name of another man
on board the Ophir, with Motley, Doyle and Evans. It was Arthur Rathers, a great friend of Chance Newtons, the writers. Do you think you could keep him in mind for me? Arthur Rathers, a friend of Chance Newtons. Please hold on the Wild Australia if you can, even if for a few years. It would help me greatly.

MSS 313
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
28 May 1954

Dear Eve Langley,

I still call you by that name because you have decided to retain it for your books - at any rate those published by us - and we usually deal with authors under the name used in this way. However, if you would rather I called you Oscar Wilde when I write let me know and I shall do so. I have noted that you want any rejections addressed to Oscar Wilde.

We have filed the copy of the Deed Poll and the original is returned herewith. Thank you for letting us see it. Thank you, too, for the photographs which are most interesting and unusual; we think No. 3 would probably be the best to use for publicity purposes if one is required.

All good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

MSS 315
Manuscript submitted 21.6.54 Bancroft House. Decision postponed - see correspondence. Returned to author (reg post) 8.10.54. See correspondence

MSS 317
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
29 June 1954

Dear Eve Langley,

I am sorry that your letter asking us to keep the MS of Wild Australia for you arrived too late; the MS had already been sent to you. However, if you like to send it back again we shall be glad to keep it for you.

The first copy of White Topee was shown to us today. We are all delighted with its appearance, and hope you will be, too. One of your six author's copies will be sent to you by air freight this week; the others will follow by ordinary mail. The one thing I regret is that Douglas Stewart is in England and so won't be able to review it for the Bulletin. He was such an enthusiastic admirer of The Pea Pickers. But no doubt there will be other reviewers with perception enough to recognize the quality of White Topee. Anyway, the important thing of course is that it has that quality. I am sure it is a book that will live.

The MS of Bancroft House has arrived. I am looking forward to reading it.

Yours faithfully,

MSS 321
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
1 August 1954

Dear Miss McDonald,

I have done all I can from this end to give White Topee what publicity is possible. I gave a copy to Mr Duthie, the City Librarian and he was very grateful, and wrote to me, saying, "It is exciting to know the writer personally and we all look forward with interest and delight to reading White Topee." Then Mary Dobby, whose husband, Pat Dobby, is an announcer at 1YA, took the book up to Bob Lowrie of the magazine Here and Now. He sent it along to Bill Person of the English Department up at the Auckland University, to read it and do a write-up of it in Here and Now. Professor Arnold Wall also rang up and asked for a loan of it; and if he likes it, and he always likes all my work, he may do a very good helpful review for one of the local dailies. Mary also got a letter from Sarah Campion of 1YA and she is most anxious to help on her station and asks me to ask you to bring out Pea Pickers when you can; when she was told the nature and content of Wild Australia, she said directly that it should be next on the list. I showed Mary Dobby the Oscar Wilde part of White Topee and she said Sarah Campion and the other reviewers should give it a fair amount of prominence; it impressed her very well, and she liked it enormously. I told her, and Willow Macky, another Auckland writer, that you thought it would have an electrifying effect on your readers, but they took a much calmer view of that, and thought it wouldn't set the Thames on
fire in New Zealand, at least. Of course they all know me personally and understand it, more or less, quite clearly. Miss Hazard, the cataloguing librarian has just finished White Topee, and she thinks it a strangely beautiful and serious piece of work, and is quite satisfied, as to its worth; she has handed it on to another librarian to read... They are all so keen to read it, really; but meanwhile, of course, much to Mr Duthie’s disgust and irritation, we are held up because no shipment of the book has reached Whitcom and Tombs or our local booksellers yet. I went down and asked if they had come, but they haven’t, so the Library is just depending on authors copies. Mr Bond, a publisher who is working with me in the gallery, when he had read the book, saluted me with, “I feel I must greet you as one of the last of the great Romantics,” and said the book was startlingly lovely, and the he felt that a really great and mysterious story lay behind the Oscar Wilde portion, but that he would not ask. So, you see, the book appears to be quite satisfactory. I hope I have news and as kindly and understanding comments from your end of the publishing. When I took the book down to Whitcomb and Tombs, they said, in Italics. “WHEN ARE A & R GOING TO REPRINT PEA PICKERS? WE COULD HAVE SOLD HUNDREDS OF COPIES OF IT OVER THE YEARS.” White Topee is on order with them, they thought the cover, marvellous. Took it down to the Herald office to MacPherson, my old friend and he’ll do a review of it. The dust-jacket is to go into the Public Libraries (sic) front case, and Mr Duthie wants a whole windowful (sic) for display; but says...”What the deuce is the good... if the shipments don’t arrive soon? I want copies for the branches.” So... here we are... waiting, waiting for shipments to arrive and send out from Central, and the Branches. I do hope they’ll be over soon. The Bulletin sent for a photo and biography, too. I have obliged. I am busy at work on my new book THE NIMROD TYPE

is the name of it. The story of an eternal hunter from the eighties onward, but no mention of those years at all, only Australia, as usual. Regarding the mention of Bancroft and Marie Wilton in Bancroft House; it just happened that in 1869-70, they did a play called School, I think, at the Coburg Theatre or the Haymarket. The leading parts were a Mr and Mrs Sutcliffe. Bancroft played Mr Sutcliffe, and Marie Wilton played the part of Mrs Sutcliffe. Hinc lacrimae. I enclose a photograph taken last week; hope you like it.

Yours ever

EVE LANGLEY

NB. The book, White Topee is exquisitely done, from beginning to end; many, many thanks.

8th of August. Further to White Toppees, we have put a dust jacket in the case in the lending department downstairs, and it looks very beautiful. Another was put in the show case in the black and white marble vestibules of the Library, just inside the glass doors, so that the reading public can see it when they come in. It is in with the rest of the book covers and has been given place of honour right in the middle and looks very effective. We have a very beautiful Public Library and the upstairs and gallery having been painted, the staircase down into the lending dept and vestibule have also been painted. I suggested to Mr Duthie and Mr Colgan that they paint the iron rails below the antique brown of the varnished hand rail, a rich sumptuous purple as of lilac; quoting to them my eternal...

“Of course, to one so modern as I am, “Enfant de mon siecle”, merely to look at the world will always be lovely. I tremble with pleasure when I think that on the very day of... both the laburnum and the lilac will be blooming in the gardens, and that I shall see the wind stir into restless beauty the swaying gold of the one, and make the other toss the pale purple of its plumes so that all the air shall be Arabia to me. “Translated into the pure Greek this passage has the profound and mournful beauty of any utterance of Nero’s or Virgil’s, or more possibly Euripides, although both Nero and Virgil wrote far more feeling Greek verse than ever he did. I think. Anyhow, it was agreed on that we should have the Arabian purple lilac rails, and a pale Arabian blue of a heavenly tint for the walls with a silver Salome moon line of railing elsewhere. I wanted the library painted in rich Babylonic hues, but the purple rails have prevailed. Against this exotic Oscar Wildeian background together with a superb Canova Venus and a huge canvas of Burne Jones, “TOIL” and a rich brown shadowy Venice at evening, bu some one who knew Sickert, but was before him, the dust jacket of WHITE TOPEE looks very nice. Miss Hazard passed the book on to Miss Messieur and now that she has read it, it will go out. I gave a copy to read to Mr Conway. J.P. our Art Gallery curator; he like it and thinks the cover marvellous. Sarah Campion told Mr Bond that she will do what she can for a review; she read the book and thinks it is very good. Her husband Anthony Alpers, son of Mr John? Chief Justice Alpers, the author of “Cheerful Yesterdays” has just published his book on Catherine Mansfield. I hope to hear from you soon; have done my best, anyhow, to publicize (sic) the book.
EVEL

'PS As this was going to the post your letter arrived, saying that you have no copy of Bancroft House. We shall send you the one we have, by registered post, so that you can make another.'

MSS 323
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
14 September 1954

Dear Miss McDonald, I enclose some rough proofs (6) and two press photos for you. Please keep the rough proofs out of the strong light and return them to me, stating if any of them appeal to you and if you would like a copy of any. The two press photos are yours to file or use as you like. Kindly return the rough proofs as soon as you can because I need them at hand. "WHITE TOPEE" is going well over here. It is well liked and popular at the library; quite a number of people have called regarding it and asked to meet me, principally because they regard the book as exciting and different.

Yours truly
EVE LANGLEY

Many thanks for the way you brought it out and particularly for the beautiful cover design which has been admired by many.

PLEASE WRITE AT ONCE AND LET ME KNOW IF YOU GOT THE MANUSCRIPT OF BANCROFT HOUSE SAFELY. I posted it in June and you have not written me regarding it yet. NB I seem to remember that you wrote saying it had arrived, but have mislaid the letter.

MSS 325
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
20 September 1954

Dear Eve Langley,

I know you will be waiting for news of Bancroft House. I am sorry to have taken so long. The present position is this: I have read it and enjoyed it immensely, but the firm's official opinion is that it is too soon after White Topee to make a decision about your next book. We never think it a good idea to have two books by the same author following too closely and, or course, the sales of a previous book must be taken into consideration. It is still too early to get a clear view of White Topee's success from the purely business point of view. We have been pleased so far with its reception by reviewers. With work like yours a favourable review depends a lot on the type of person who is doing it because the rather literal and pedestrian mind is completely baffled by it.

Anyway, I do hope we shall be able to publish Bancroft House, but, as I have pointed out before, the final decision does not rest with me, and at present the firm would rather leave the matter open for a while. I know this is rather trying from the author's point of view, but I hope you will feel that you can wait in patience.

In the meantime, I think it would be a good idea if you could make another copy of it, if you have not already done so. The present one, being designed to save space, is rather difficult to read, in fact the main reason it has taken me so long it that my eyes could take only a little at a time. I did not mind that, except that I was impatient to read more, but since it will have to be read by several other people I think it would be a good idea to have a double spaced copy on white paper and one side of the page.

I think Bancroft House is a wonderful place. I have been trying to think of other houses in literature, but cannot recollect any with such a rich personality. I particularly like its white harp tree and galahs and the rain coming up, and dozens of other things, but there is no time to discuss them now.

Yours sincerely

MSS 333
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
11 October 1954

Dear Nan McDonald,

I am sending along just this recent photo. Might be useful...some day. And under another cover, a copy of this weeks OBSERVER, with a photo of self and article in it also a critique of WHITE TOPEE. I know you will be interested in it. I was thinking about BANCROFT HOUSE lately. DO
you think it would be a good idea to send it back to me, registered, if you don’t know whether it can be used or not? Or could I get a copy of it, typed over there? And I could pay for it? I really miss having the MSS, and hope you can advise me regarding it, in your next.

I am working on THE NIMROD TYPE at present. This is to be followed by a book called THE HALL CAINE. I have to keep writing, because you see I had to submit a list of 20 books to the New Zealand Literary Fund before they would give me the literary grant of £300. However, I really love writing so... So many New Zealanders...and the press itself have suggested that I write a novel about this country that I suppose I shall have to get down to it soon. Therefore, THE FALL CAINE will be the ultimate or penultimate book on Australia, if I follow the advice of the New Zealand press. Whitcomb and Tombs are featuring WHITE TOPEE in an original way in their window, and have it in the shop...beautifully surrounded by very Eastern and charming Chinese “WINDSONGS”; those utterly exquisite chunks of slender glass that sing and sung mystically all throughout a hot day in the East. And this shows, at least; that someone in Whitcomb and Tombs has a strangely lovely imagination and...oddest of all...really understands me and my writing even as you do. Best wishes.

Oscar Wilde

MSS 335
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
10 December 1954

Dear Eve Langley,

I think our last letters crossed – I hope that by now the MS of Bancroft House has arrived safely. Thank you for the extra photo; we have filed it with the others. Thankyou, too, for the New Zealand Observer, with the article and review. The writer in both cased seemed to me to be impressed and fascinated, but a little baffled, by you and your works. Did you think so?

I was surprised and a little disturbed by your remarks on your Literary Fund grant. Surely they can’t expect you to write twenty novels one after the other! That would be a lifetime’s output, or more, for most writers – serious writers, I mean, not the ones who churn out a couple of written-to-formula romances every six months. Even if you normally write quickly it would be hard to feel you had to; a sense of haste and pressure could not be good for your work. And you should at least be able to have a little time for rest and refreshment between novels. But perhaps I am taking your remarks too literally; you may have been speaking hyperbolically. I hope so, anyway.

All good wishes for the work,

Yours sincerely
Appendix 5

Manuscripts 1955

MSS 337
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
7 January 1955

Dear Nan McDonald,

After a thoroughly island Christmas, with fine and tropically hot days, spent down in the mangrove creek or sitting inside the cool launch, drinking orange drinks and smoking cigarettes, it is ended. Arawa, Sir Ernest Davis's horse won the Auckland Cup; the holidays ended in rain that came up from Tahiti and soaked the Fijian looking hills around, the radio 1YA gave forth Maori news and songs and all else and once more, well soaked in the jade green Maori seas with The Long White Cloud as our sail, we set forth on the dry roaring trade-winds for the New Year 1955. I hope your year will be a happy one, for you. I saw a glimpse of poems from your first book, The Lonely Fire, and is still sparkles dustily on the hearth of my soul.

By now you will have got my letters and poem. Our letters crossed once more. Thanks, I got Bancroft House back safely. I hope you can publish it; I suppose if all goes well, you will. During the holidays I have been working away on The Nimrod Type. And another good book, called Ship Me Somewhere East of Suez. I shall send both over to you as soon as they are finished and you can read them. Wont be long over these two. Rereading Bancroft House, I like it just as well as the fortnight in which I wrote it. It is a jewel-like book, embling the past carefully. Next one is The Hall Caine. Then another one after that...very interesting writing. That means six in hand, counting Bancroft House and Wild Australia. Im glad you're looking after the MSS of that, just in case of accidents. Yet, I was quite correct in saying that the Literary Fund Committee had asked me to write the 20 books. I had to give the list, the full list of them, before I could be granted the money. That'll be twenty after the list above. The main thing is time. I don't tie myself to writing. I work at the Public Library, you know, every day, and go in every morning with a great couple people. (sic) He is an artist not long up from Tahiti, where he used to live and paint on a coral atoll. His wife is a lovely Tahitian. On some mornings I see him toiling along the red volcanic ranges in the misty rain with his painters umbrella, a huge canvas thing held over his head. These two are romance itself. He saw all the great artistic tracks the French painters from Gaugin downward made over the Pacific and the South Sea islands.

Well, I write at night or during the weekend, just in between being in the sea and puttying the launch or painting it. Its no great hardship, writing, to me. I laugh when you mention refreshments. Ah, I gravitate from the typewriter to the cordial bottle and the cigarettes. There is plenty of refreshment, alright. Ah, this lovely lazy island life! All I want to do is sit about and write books. Gloria Rawlinson, the poet, and her mother Rosalie, gave me a large and wonderful cake this Christmas. It was gift to a Roman god. A lovely white cake, with straight and snowy Roman columns under a Roman portico, grey and pink Greek roses above and along the black above the columns the great words.

FORTUNA MAGNA.

Best wishes

MSS 339
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
n.d.

Dear Miss McDonald, I am sending over to you a set of two Chinese poems that you might like. And also, I should like to wish you and Angus and Robertsons A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and thank you before it arrives for the publication of White Topee which, I have been told, is selling well locally. I hope you got the OBSERVER I posted over to you with the colorful article in it.

And if you see Mr Quentin Davis, the artist who designed the dust jacket with the marvellous white topee and the red purple tree... will you please thank him a thousand Eastern times for me? We think so highly of that beautiful cover that it influenced Mr Duthie, the Chief Librarian enough to go forth and buy a great roll of Acetate, very expensive stuff, in which to bind, cover and protect
the work of Mr Davis and other books in line with it. And it now shimmers under a glistening cover of stuff like pure storm in the Public Library. Please thank him again and again for...A thing of beauty that shall be a joy forever.

And many thanks again to you all for your love of the book and the production of it.

MSS 341
Eve Langley
Poems
The Temple of Tunting
The Kowhai Tree

MSS 343
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
25 January 1955

Dear Eve Langley,

Thankyou for your letter and the two poems. “The Temple of Tunting” is my favourite, I think, though “The Kowhai Tree” is beautiful too, with its bronze cape and ivory shoulders. The boat caught in the blossoming tree is most fascinating, especially the picture in the last six lines - the last line I like best of all:

“And hears the bright dew strike three bells in dream”.

I am enclosing a number of duplicate copies of White Topee reviews that were sent to us. They are good on the whole - in some there are silly comments, but most of them show a glimpse of genuine appreciation of the quality of the book. No doubt you have already seen some of them, but you may find a use for the extra copies.

Thank you again for the poems.

Yours sincerely,

MSS 347
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
14 March 1955

Dear Nan McDonald,

I must thank you for the bundle of press-cuttings. No, I hadn't seen them at all before. I am late in answering you nice letter and hope you'll forgive me. We are busy at the Library with the Auckland Festival of Arts coming on, soon. There is to be a Literary Section, and Mr Colgan, the Deputy Chief, has taken four of my books on, for exhibition. My copy of NOT YET THE MOON, as Duttons brought out The Peapickers. A copy of White Topee. One of the MSS of Wild Australia, and the MSS of White Topee, too. He has read them all and likes the MSS of both. The local papers, particularly the Auckland Star, keep a Wilde line running all the time, in line with much of Wild Australia, and it all helps and fives the papers a relationairy (sic) air and the fine sense of backing into the ‘eighties which is being cultivated nowadays.

Our local radio station helps out the cultural atmosphere by putting on such plays as Floradora and Magda, plays that were running in Sydney in 1899 or so, and thus we get a good sense of les temps retrouves.

We have to live such very studied lives nowadays in Auckland.

The heat is frightful. I am busy writing Ship Me Somewhere East of Suez and in heat much like Suez. A few more years of this and all Auckland will be in tropical whites and under the shadow of pukah wallahs, eating frozen Gula Malaxxas, Malaccas, I mean, in the shade of the coconut palm. Tonight is torrid and rainless. The press complains bitterly and we have drifted somehow down into he tropics and are suffering. The humidity is frightful, too. It is about the same heat of the same period I am writing about in my book, the East in 1899. And so it is helpful. I had a note from WHOS WHO IN AUSTRALIA, saying they would like to put me in. The Librarian from the Remuera Branch, (Auckland's fashionable suburb) came in the other day and told me that WHITE TOPEE was enormously popular out there. It is only in five minutes, she said, and it is gone again. I liked all the press cuttings, and think they're colorful and vivid things. The Farmer and Settler says I have said Karta Singh was a Moslem. My copy of White Topee says “the Mohammaden, Karta Singh.” I am sure I could never write about Moslems ever, in spite of Rudyard Kipling. But the book has evoked such an amount of lovely prose full of Australian pictures that I feel satisfied about it. After all the glitter and warm wording, I suppose I like the comment of HK of Country Life best of all, “Once you open this book and read twenty pages, you'll neglect your household
duties to finish it. This is a book for both sexes and all ages." But I love all the press cuttings, you
know, and think they are just what they should be, marvellously superior and richly thoughtful
decorations about an entirely decorative book.
I bought an A&R edition of ON OUR SELECTION the other day. Just for old, old times sake, and
it is a beautiful and typically Australian production.
Yours ever

MSS 345
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
23 March 1955
Dear Miss McDonald,
I am enclosing the receipt for the royalties received yesterday, through the Public Trust. Thank you
very much indeed for them. I am glad the book returned A&R so much, really, and that you’ve
only a few copies remaining, 1938 out of 5000 or so. I think that’s quite good, don’t you? I do
hope you can publish Bancroft House, since White Topees’ sale has been so good. I have not re-
typed out Bancroft House yet, since I am waiting for word from you about it. I haven’t (sic) had
time anyhow to do it. Mr Luxford, the Mayor, has somewhat abruptly closed our branch of the
Public Library and handed the binding over to a firm of bookbinders in the city, so I am now home
for a while. Mr Duthie, the Chief-Librarian, has offered me other work in the Library, but I really
feel in need of a rest for awhile anyhow. And I can rest in comparative peace now, because I have
my own home, you know, and its lovely out in the ranges in autumn. The request for a reprint of
Peapickers is still strong, and whenever I meet university students they always complain that it is
listed as a standard Australia work useful for students of the language and the country, but if you
go to the average library or bookshop, you simply cant get a copy of it. Mr Bond, the London
publisher who was working with me, said often that a reprint of the book, Peapickers, would be
invaluable, because he knew of such a lot of people who wanted to get hold of a copy, but just
couldn’t, because its’ out of print. So, if you DO reprint it, you will be doing me a favour, because
I hear so many cries from every side of ... "Why don’t they reprint Peapickers?" And after all, it is
really a great compliment to the firm of Angus and Robertson.
Let me know if you want a copy of Bancroft House sent over for publishing and I shall send it over
at once. I am still at work on SUEZ. I had a poem called GEYSER in the Bulletin, recently.
Bet wishes,
Yours ever,

MSS 349
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
12 May 1955
Dear Nan McDonald,
Here is Ship Me Somewhere East of Suez, a fast moving adventure story of experiences in the
Boxer Rebellion of 1899-1901. If it could be published as fiction, I am positive that it would be
popular, and that what was said of White Topee would be also said of Suez. The “Once you open
this book and read twenty pages you’ll neglect your household duties to finish
A book for both
sexes and ages.” And “A must for anyone who likes life and color (sic) and vigor (sic) in their
reading.” As the Sydney Telegraph said of White Topee.
Yours ever

MSS 351
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
12 May 1955
Dear Nan McDonald,
This is an early letter to tell you that I am forwarding to you under separate cover, my fifth book,
SHIP ME SOMEWHERE EAST OF SUEZ. I hope it arrives safely; and that you like it. Now,
since this is the original manuscript, just as it was written, without preamble or previous attempts,
and since I’ve no copy of it, you could send it back to me when you’ve read it, under registered
post, and if you want a copy of it I shall make one out for you and send that over.
Suez moves fast and doesnt waste you time, to any vert great extent. The first part of it would make
a marvellous moving picture, I suppose. Anyhow, here it is. And like the rest of the books I have
submitted to you, it is of course yours to do what you like with, in the way of cutting and pruning
and shaping and moulding, just as you did with White Topee. I was in at the Auckland Public Library last week, to see Mr Duthie, the City Librarian and Mr Colgan, the Deputy, about the Literary Show in the Arts Festival here. The manuscript of WILD AUSTRALIA is to be prominently placed and a copy of White Topee beside it, and they are doing all the writers signatures out in huge reproduction in coloured balloonike (sic) letters to show that we are swollenup (sic) with importance, perhaps. I know you will laugh at this; but I think it will look alright. And no one cares much, for of course, writers are not, luckily, as important as Prime Ministers, are they? Those of the Library staff who have read Wild Australia, think it is remarkable. It will be examined and read by thousands during the Arts Festival Week, and if that isn't a good test for a book, I don't know what is. Bancroft House won't be there, of course. I took in the MSS of White Topee, and the Library have their own copy of Pea Pickers.

So, I've done my best toward Arts Festival in Auckland. A catalogue is to be issued with authors careers in it, and the Auckland writers are to be publicized (sic) as well as they can be.

I am still at home, free now. Mr Duthie said that later on if I like, he would give me work on one of the desks down in the Reference Dept, or I could help with the cataloguing. But, you know, odd as it may seem, I can't, I just can't work for too long under a roof. Isnt it odd? I suffered in the same way in Australia. I had several good jobs in Melbourne, and had to give everyone of them up, through ill health brought about by working indoors. The sun and the earth, they're life to me, and I can't stay long all day under a roof. Others, I notice, thrive on it. Strange, but true!

Hence the reason why the greater part of my early life was spent out in the open on selections and farms and plantations.

Now that Suez is finished, I have to go ahead with The Nimrod Type, the sixth book. After that comes The Crossover Hotel. The sequel to Suez. Now this book, like Pea pickers, or Bancroft House, is a purely and simply Australian book. You leave New South Wales in Suez, and go over to Victoria, to the Crossover Hotel in Gippsland. And there will be hundreds of wild men about, of the whiskered variety, such as Edmonds featured in his book, The Golden Shanty. Everything in the book is Australian... as in Pea Pickers, and Bancroft House. So whatever you feel about Suez, I do want you to remember that the book is following, The Crossover Hotel, is to be Australia incarnate. I intend to book to be my eternal tribute to the immortal Warrigal district in Gippsland, and shall do my best.

Now, I shall dash off, hoping that you are well. There may be a note from you down at the Post Office, to which I go only fortnightly; so I'll just leave this letter open in case,

Yours ever,

Eve Langley

By the way, I believe Kiplings line runs, "Put me somewhere East of Suez." But it doesn't look as well as "Ship". I think I could bear to be shipped anywhere. But I don't think I should like to be put anywhere. And I've read a number of versions with "Ship me," in it.

Also, with regards to the hero's name, Dolly Gray; I cannot bear the word Gray; nor even Dorrie Gray; so I have named him... Dolly Grey. But it could be spelt Gray if you wished. Just that I loathe it when its spelt Gray. It sort of sticks out in my brain and hurts.

If you liked you could keep the hero called "Dolly Gray" or Grey, all through the book, and let the other name drop entirely. This would be fine, I think. "Dolly Gray" was a wellknown (sic) person in London in the '80s, and will be familiar to you through various channels.

MSS 353
Pat Lawlor, Secretary, New Zealand Literary Fund Advisory Committee to Angus & Robertson
19 May 1955

Dear Sirs,

In the case of books subsidised from our Fund the publishers concerned supply us with two copies for record for record purposes. One of these goes to the Internal Affairs Department to supplement the overseas displays of New Zealand books made from time to time. Although we did not directly subsidise Eve Langley's White Topee we did give her grant to enable her to complete this and other books. Under the circumstances we regard this book as one in which we have a personal interest. We would be grateful, therefore, if you could give us two copies for inclusion in the display libraries mentioned above.

Yours faithfully,

MSS 355
Beatrice Davis to Pat Lawlor  
2 June 1955

Dear Miss Lawlor,

In reply to your letter of 19th May, addressed to our Wellington office, we shall have pleasure in supplying you with two copies of Eve Langley’s White Topee, free of charge. Your grant to her must have been of enormous help, and she has undoubtedly an outstanding talent.

We are asking Mr Griffin of our Wellington office to send you the books.

Yours sincerely,

MSS 357

Pat Lawlor to Angus & Robertson,  
15 June 1955

Dear Sirs:

Thank you for your letter of the 2nd June advising that your Wellington office would be supplying us with two copies of Eve Langley’s “white Topee”. These have been received by us today.

Yours faithfully,

MSS 359

Eve Langley to Nan McDonald  
23 July 1955

Dear Miss McDonald,

Just a hurried note to ask you about SUEZ. Have you read it yet and could you give me your opinion of it? I write to you on May, 13 and told you I was sending the MSS over. I hope you got it safely and have read it. I should like to hear from you regarding it. I expected a letter from you about it early this month, but got no word, so shall be relieved to hear from you as soon as possible.

Regarding Bancroft House...do you want me to start typing out the MSS for you now? I shall be free within a week because I have only twenty pages more to go before finishing my 6th book, The Nimrod Type. So let me know about Bancroft House, wont you, and if you want it I can get down to typing it at once.

Mr Duthie, the Chief Librarian of the Auckland Public Library wrote to tell me that the Literary Show was quite successful, and that both WILD AUSTRALIA and WHITE TOPEE aroused a lot of interest. I had a long poem called “the Dresser” in the Bulletin recently. Did you see it? The Nimrod Type is the sequel to Bancroft House and a wonderfully rich packed book full of incident. I like it quite well. I shall be glad to hear from you, at long last,

Ever yours

MSS 361

Nan McDonald to Eve Langley  
29 July 1955

Dear Eve Langley,

I have now read Ship Me Somewhere East of Suez with great enjoyment, especially of its rich and strange Chinese flavour. But I think Bancroft House should still be the first to be considered for publication. It would be more likely, in my opinion, to make a successful book; its outlines are clearer and simpler, and it is more closely related to everyday experience, though with all of the colour and poetry that people so often fail to see in such experience. East of Suez is in you more fantastic vein, and we find that most readers have only a limited appetite for the fantastic. If the decision rested with me I should choose Bancroft House first, and I think it is more likely to find favour with the powers here. However, until I have a more easy-to-read copy I cant ask them to read it, and so cant give you any definite decision on it. So I think you should press on with the typing of a new copy – on white paper, one side only, with double-spaced typing. I suppose you think we make a fuss about our eyes, but with all the MSS that must be read eyestrain is practically an occupational disease for publishers, and that single spacing on pink paper is really so trying that only your most devoted admirers (such as myself) would persevere in reading it.

Would you like me to send the copy of “Ship Me Somewhere East of Suez” back to you now, and if so to which address? Or would you prefer us to hold it for a while?
Did I tell you that Beatrice Davis and I had lunch with Gloria Rawlinson when she was passing through Sydney, and talked a good deal of you and your works. She is a most interesting person.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely

MSS 363
Reader's Report
Ship Me Somewhere East of Suez
July 1955
To Photocopy

MSS 373
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
8 August 1956

Dear Nan McDonald,

Just a very hurried note to ask you how Bancroft House is going? I should have written before, but I have been busy, and my friend, Roger Melisop, the Auckland barrister is in hospital with a great gash in his head through falling off his motorbike, so have been busy looking after him and worrying about him. Kindly write and tell me what is happening to Bancroft House, won't you? I am most anxious to know what you are going to do with it, so please let me know by next mail if you can. Hope you are well and that you liked Bancroft House. I am in Who's Who in Australia this year and Bancroft House is in, too...

Yours ever,

MSS 365
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
22 August 1956

Dear Miss McDonald,

Thanks for your nice letter. I am glad you liked SUEZ. Perhaps you are right, and Bancroft House would be a better first. I have started copying it out, and am waiting for some paper to come from Leightons to do the rest of it. I have just finished The Nimrod Type, the sequel to Bancroft House, but shall not bother you with it, unless you publish Bancroft and are interested in reading the MSS. I have started my 7th book, The Crossover Hotel, and shall have to wait until Bancroft is typed out before I can finish it. The sequel to The Nimrod Type is another book I have started. It is called The Australian, and in this book Steve leaves Australia, and that is the end of it. So, with Bancroft House, The Nimrod Type and The Australia, you have the end of the story. Pea Pickers and White Topee were the beginning of it, and the three mentioned above are the finish. As soon as the MSS is ready I shall send it over to you.

I think it would be best to send SUEZ back, registered, to me. I can bind it and type out another copy for you, if you want it.

Many thanks indeed for the nice appreciation of SUEZ. I am glad you enjoyed it.

Best wishes ever,

Eve Langley

NB I note the strain of reading that small MSS and understand it, too. I don't think anyone but you would have done it for me, but I know you always try very hard to help me, and you know that I am always, always grateful for that help.

EVEL
Please send Suez to this address.
779 Laingholme Drive
Laingholme

MSS 367
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
21 November 1955

Dear Eve Langley,
The new and handsome copy of Bancroft House has arrived safely; that you very much for sending it. Its further reading has begun, and I am looking forward with interest to hearing different opinions on it. I shall let you know of any progress in the matter.

You write your novels with such bewildering rapidity that I am never sure which one you are working on at the moments, but whatever it is I send my best wishes for it, and for yourself.

Sincerely,

MSS 369
Reader’s Report, ‘Bancroft House’.
24 November 1955

MSS 371
Reader’s Report, ‘Bancroft House’
Recommends that novel should be published.
Appendix 6

Manuscripts 1956

MSS 373
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
8 August 1956

Dear Nan McDonald,

Just a very hurried not to ask you how Bancroft House is going? I should have written before, but I have been busy, and my friend, Roger Melisop, the Auckland barrister is in hospital with a great gash in his head through falling off his motorbike, so have been busy looking after him and worrying about him. Kindly write and tell me what is happening to Bancroft House, wont you? I am most anxious to know what you are going to do with it, so please let me know by next mail if you can. Hope you are well and that you liked Bancroft House. I am in Who's Who in Australia this year and Bancroft House is in, too...

Yours ever

MSS 375
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
23 September 1956

Dear Beatrice Davis,

I have already written to Nan McDonald, re my book Bancroft House sent over to her in November, 1955, and of which I havent had word yet, ...so imagining that she might be abroad on holiday I am writing to you to ask you to let me know the fate of the book and what is to be done with it...and shall be so glad to hear from you as soon as you can let me know.

MSS 377
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
23 September 1956

Dear Nan McDonald,

I wrote to you some time before about Bancroft House and what was to be done with it, and am anxious to know what has become of it and what is to be its fate, so am writing again to ask you to write to me as soon as possible and let me know how it stands with the readers of the firm and yourself. Can you do that for me? I am very anxious about it and hope you will be able to fix me up with some news of it, so on... and thinking you might be abroad on leave I have written to Beatrice Davis and well, and hope to hear from wither you or her, quite soon...

Yours ever

MSS 379
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
7 December 1956

[There is a drawing on this page]

Dear Nan McDonald,

We are now in Brisbane, right in Queensland among those paw paws and other eatables and blossomable things that you wrote to me about when I was over home in NZ, and I thought I'd write and ask you to send on any mail that may arrive for me, care of the SYDNEY BULLETIN OFFICE, 239, Adelaide St, Brisbane, but please send it before Xmas as I shall be off to either the Far North or back to Sydney on the 2nd of January, precisely. So don't send me any mail after you get this letter, save that which is lying with you. But I don't suppose there is much. I asked to see copies of both The Pea Pickers and White Topee in the Queensland Library, and saw them, and had a chat to the Librarian about the writing of them. Told her I should like to go cane cutting, but she wasn't enthusiastic and spoke of young Italians with hard corned hands through use of the cane knife. So shan't worry the growers, I think, but regard the Far North from the point of view of one who recalls the cane as having been wielded I NSW schools, but not allowed in Victorian institutions. By the way I should be glad and obliged if you'd post to me, my copy of White Topee
which I left with Beatrice, and shall most truly pay you the cost when we meet again in Jan. And tell Beatrice how much I loved staying with Vinia and how very kind she was to me, also.

I've been to the beach and all else at Sandgate and have at last seen the Queensland seas in all their grey slow moving lugubrious splendour, and put an amazing creature in a tin, wrapped in a rag, and walked many a mile with him, and he colored the rag as purple as the toga of Nero, emperor of Rome, and we parted with mutual regret at eventide, he to his salty wind curled pool by the Queensland sea and I, to my bus past banana plantation and paw paw. I've done miles of streets and the old Queensland house of the past intrigues me so much... in Queensland brown with lattices and scented frangipanni, rattan blinds, secret gates and doors, fine iron work, delicious to look at, and many other individual traces of what the dear weather office call "the tropical division." The black crows that fly daily crying harshly over Brisbane, from the bush to the Botanic Gardens where I suspect they breakfast daily on bread and cake, are also so Australian that I don't want to return to my moutons (sic) (NZ) but must, I suppose. I've a lot of bush stuff and flowers drying dreadfully on the floor, and a book full of colored drawings of beds with blue, dark blue, mosquito nets hanging to their circular tops and think all this odd stuff ought to be exploited and commercialised even to the mosquito... all those drapes nightly and nightly only ONE mosquito! One black mosquito posed against one long rich blue mosquito net, and fresh almost raw rattan blinds in the shops... ah, Queensland, how new you are to me. I've found the red trees with silver lizards and purple trees with black spiders, my room is a deep romantic drug like blue with a large thin legged spider rushing nimbly up the wall at the very thought of rain... I should love to buy a house out of the city and live in Queensland for a long time, but must back to the wetter country of showers and mist, for company, although I think once Brisbane and Queensland generally got right into the wet cycle, it and they would never look back... Give my regards to all, and to Eric, whom I miss to map out streets for me, for I get bushed every five minutes when I stray from Adelaide St. but what a country for rich flowers, for TROPICAL FLOWERS... O, I'll be sorry to leave Queensland......

Regards, and don't forget the mail and White Topee,

**MSS 381**

Nan McDonald to Eve Langley,
12 December 1956

Dear Eve Langley,

We have sent your copy of White Topee to the Brisbane office of the Bulletin, as you requested, and also several letters that have come for you recently. Earlier letters were given to Miss Sands, who told us you had asked her to forward them.

I am glad you like the old Queensland houses; they fascinate me, too, with their high verandas with ferneries under them, and their intricate lattice-work. I have been sorry to see them replaced by parts of Brisbane by brick houses like ours, which look so squat and heavy beside them.

If you stayed till the wet season, usually later in the summer than this, you would find Brisbane wet enough, I think—a steamy, melting wetness, and you would be lucky then if you had only one mosquito in your blue net.

We all send our good wishes for your happy exploration of Queensland, and for a merry Christmas.

Yours

**MSS 383**

Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
17 December 1956

Dear Nan McDonald,

Many thanks indeed for sending up White Topee. It was waiting for me at the Bulletin office. Also got your letter. Miss Oates of the Sydney Bulletin office is so lovely. She tells me that Judith Wright lives up at Mount Tamborine and I should like to see her, so Miss Oates is going to see if you can get her address. Mt Tamborine is about 50 miles away which is rather a low, but I may be able to get there, somehow. I don't think trains go, though, but shall see. After the heavy rains, Queensland is absolutely flowering with green grass, scarlet flamboyant, frangipanni and the rest, and looks wonderful. Lately I've been all through a pineapple refinery, paw paw plantations, custard apple plantations and pineapple same, and the soil is rich and red and looks as though it would grow anything. The paw paws were huge and so were the other fruits. Outside our door a mango tree is ripening and the fruit looks great hanging in big clusters from the tree. If any more mail arrives for me, you could address it care of the Sydney Bulletin Office or keep it until I come...
back in January. Perhaps it would be best to keep it, I think. I may go on to Cairns, but its so hot, I
don't care if I go or not... It will probably be hotter up there than here, but anyhow the rain has
made Brisbane a lovely garden and I'll be sorry to leave it,
Best wishes and a Merry Christmas to all in the office and A&R generally

MSS 385
No manuscript assigned.

MSS 387
Eve Langley to Angus and Robertson
[December] 1956
Christmas Card
To wish you every happiness this Christmas and in the Year to come.
To everyone at Angus & Robertson, from Eve Langley
Appendix 7

Manuscripts 1957

MSS 395
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
[January 1957]

Dear Nan McDonald,

Through green jungle, crocodiles and taipan to Cairns with the Arukandji at the end of the trip on the Cairns beach. I hope you are well, and have got all the letters you sent along to me. You could write to me care of POSTE RESTANTE CAIRNS, if you like or send my letters there. I’ll be here till February anyhow. I’d love to go on to Darwin, but can’t this time.

The flying foxes of Cairns are what I love most, and I watch them every night coming in high above the town to settle down for the night in the mango and the paw paw trees, and the big coconut palms. This is the sort of country to write in, and write good books, full of can cutters, lots of wonderful types here. Am off to see the sugar mills one day, Barwon falls another and have been to the Great Barrier Reef. If you think Poste Restante too precarious, send care of Whitticks News Agency, Abbot St, Cairns, and I’ll get it for sure. Have started two books yp here, FLAMBOYANT, is one. FLYING FOXES, the other. Notes on themes, red and black, night and day, and its so HOT here, that I wonder what it is like in China, etc…Cold showers all the time. Cold food, all the time, just cold, cold intake and hot output. What a town, is dear Cairns of the last outpost. The monsoon has just started and is welting and pelting down. No let up. Just plain monsoon pouring it out all over the startling green grass. I suppose you’ve been to Cairns? Its so flowery, frantically flowery, I suppose you know it well and miles and miles of sugar cane running from up here to right back to Innisfail and then down to Mackay, Gods, tons and miles of sugar cane.

The crushing is about done all over, but the young stuff, six weeks old is coming on like one thing all over the place. As far as you can see, theres just nothing but sugar cane, cane, cane, everything is sugar cane up here. Banana plantations too, and paw paw, and the big ripe ripe fruit falling off the mangos, but you know Queensland of course, well, so I shant be bothering you with my descriptions of it. I live for the night and the snowy netting, but Cairns is great by night with soft brilliant lights and the big hotels, such as HIDES, and the Crown and the Lounge with their shady tropic verandah and lights look wonderful. Brown swamps and mangroves and crocs and the rest of it. I had two poems on Qlnd in the Bulletin and I could write tons more, but for the HEAT. My back is sopping wet all day. I pour the monsoon back into the monsoon. Sweat and heat all day and a t night, too. Brutally British being, I call it. Betty Carr Rollet (?) missed me, but wrote and I may be off to see her at Beaumaris if I go Vic ward. Up here the same old houses all rattan and lattice and secret, the secret must’ve been those flying foxes, for they’re worth the trip up. The soldierly in with us were off to Darwin and Malaya and sucked sugar cane the way up and played mouthorgans and slept all over the floor angelic in the dirt sprawling in hot sleep everywhere. They came from Rockhampton and got out at Townsville to go to Mt Isa. Ill be back in Sydney in February and shant be writing to you after this warm line or two. For my only love here is the cold shower, three a day and more if I could, but you don’t feel any colder, I can assure you….I wanted to go to Kuranda and the Barron Falls today but the monsoon is going well and strong. I’ll stagger out on to the long bare verandah to see if I can get hold of a cool wind off those mountains blue and above me. Shall be off now, and hope you send the mail care of Whitticks, Abbots Street or Poste Restante, Cairns, and I’ll get it. Miss Oates of the Bulletin in Brisbane sends it up to Witticks News Agency and it gets me.

Yours ever

MSS 389
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
22 January 1957

Dear Nan McDonald,

A note to ask you if you saw a page or two of old exercise book pages among the manuscript and book I brought over. Would you glance through them and if you see the pages, exercise book, lined
would you send them up to me when you write next - or open one of the letters and put the pages in, it may be only one, if I remember rightly. Its from my red Book of Poems started in Australia in 1922 & I wanted to print a poem of C? the page, merely as a momento. I hear Xavier Herbert is up here and would like to see him, but he is in bed paralysed by a poisonous toxic ?, so cant. I was at Port Douglas yesterday and have also seen the Barwon Falls. Regards to all,
Eve Langley (Also, front of letter card)

MSS 391
Nan McDonald to Eve Langley
30 January 1957
Dear Eve Langley,
I've looked through all the manuscripts you left with us, and can't find any exercise-book pages amongst them. I don't remember seeing them at any time; perhaps they are tucked away in some of your other things.

I read and enjoyed your Queensland poem in the Bulletin. There must be some good material for poems lying about up there, but I'm sure I couldn't write in that climate. My mind works best in a frost. I haven't been to North Queensland, only the southern part, but I've heard much of the north from various cousins who've worked there. We are looking forward to hearing your impressions.

Yours sincerely

MSS 393
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
25 February 1957
Dear Nan,
Here we are at Panlooks to whose property you could send all my mail and I'll get it here. You'll be sorry to hear that dear old Charlie died 2 years ago, was working down at Sullivans and died of paralysis, dear Charlie Willoughby. All the rest of the book's heros and heroines are all well but some are parents and Grandparents, for I haven't been here for 25 years, and the tiny trees that Arthur Bennet used to hoist things around are now 50 foot tall and about 6 foot around the trunk. The whole place is ?? and very ?. It was hot and fine in the old days. The Panlook is just the same, and my book White Topee is over there at his home. His son, Young Bill, who was 5 when I was here is now the father of yet another Young Bill and all the girls are grown up and married. So many changes have taken place here. Well, Nan have just finished a hard days work picking and? 40 lbs in a large bag at 35/- per 100 lbs, and have to be up tomorrow morning to pick more, but i love picking hops. So send along the mail to ?

MSS 397
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
26 August 1957
Dear Nan McDonald,
I am back in New Zealand with the rain pouring down over the ferns and miss Australia and the dry lands very much. I had a good trip back, but it hasn't stopped raining since I landed and there is nothing but yellow mud and green country as far as you can see.

I am starting a new book called The Wanderer Returns, and meanwhile, hope to hear from you regarding Bancroft House. Beatrice told me she would take it and I hope it will be alright.

Best wishes to you, to Eric, and Elsie, (?) and yourself and dear Beatrice, from Eve, who wishes to be back again in dear Australia, with you all.
Appendix 8

Manuscripts 1958

MSS 401
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
30 July 1958

Dear Beatrice,

I was so delighted to get the six copies of the newly reprinted Pea pickers, for which everyone has
been imploring for years.

I am so glad to think that you were able to bring it out and the format and cover of the book attracts
me very much. The two huge brown gum trees framing the scene are truly Australian.

I read it with the same pleasure with which I read it years ago and love it as well as everyone does.

For if you ever mention it, you are sure to hear from your listener,

"O... the Pea pickers? Now... that IS a good book."

That’s the remark of my dentist down in New Lynn and he is a very able young man and a great
book lover. And he really DID love the Pea pickers.

Yours ever with love to all, Eric,

Nan and yourself.

MSS 403
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
21 November 1958

Dear Beatrice,

Herewith, the manuscript of WILD AUSTRALIA, fully revised and clean and ready to read, and
really Australian this time, and I think, much improved on, and I hope you can use it.

This book is the sequel to WHITE TOPEE, and is now just the simple account of Steve’s ride over
the alps and her work at Panlooks seeking forgetfulness of her love of Macca.

I do hope you will like it, but anyhow, I assure you, it is entirely yours to keep, for I have a copy of
it and now forward it to you to keep until such time as you CAN use it, for it really should be
published next, following on the footsteps of WHITE TOPEE. And after it, there is another sequel
on which I’m working now, and that is called THE VICTORIANS, quite a good book of a strange
but fresh texture, which I think you would like.

Meanwhile, WILD AUSTRALIA is yours to do what you like with and I should be so glad if you
put it away until such time as you can use it.

Best wishes to all

MSS 405
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
23 November 1958

Dear Beatrice,

I am sending over by surface mail, the MSS of Wild Australia, all revised and cleaned up and made
new and utterly Australian as I know you would like it to be.

I think it should be much nicer and more comfortable reading now, and easier to understand since
it is just a romantic travel over the alps by Steve in search of more Macca or in an attempt to win
his heart by departure from the lakes.

It is full of Australian scenery as usual and I know Nan liked that part of it for she commended it
when I saw her, and told me to do it all over again. Which I have done.

Anyhow, I hope you keep an eye out for it, and hang on to it for me and don’t think of sending it
back for I’ve got a copy. This book is the sequel to White Topee, and is to be followed by another
called The Victorians and then again another, called The Golden Wattle Warriors, both very
colourful books and both to come before Bancroft House. I’ll send these over within a few months
or so. I like Douglas Stewart's write up of the Pea Pickers very much and he hasn't changed his opinion of it at all.

Yours ever with love,

MSS 407
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
28 November 1958

Dear Eve,

So glad to know that you have revised the manuscript of 'Wild Australia' and now sent (sic) it to us. Naturally we shall look forward very much to reading it, and, we hope, to being able to tell you that we can publish it in due course. I note that it is a sequel to 'White Topee', and to be followed by two other books that precede "Bancroft House".

Hope you are well and happy.

Affectionately,

MSS 409
Manuscript submitted 12/12/58
'Wild Australia'
Appendix 9

Manuscripts 1959

MSS 411
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
12 March 1959

Dear Eve,

I had a letter from Ruth Park who is seized with the idea of adapting *The Pea Pickers* as a play, musical or otherwise.

For a fifteen-months’ option on dramatic, film and TV right she offers £50, and if and when her adaptation earns money she will take 50% of the proceeds, or 60% if she makes a musical play and therefore has to share her earnings with a composer.

This seems a very good idea, and I can imagine Ruth making a splendid job of the adaptation. The material has such warmth and richness that I’m surprised no one has thought of this before.

When I have your permission to go ahead, I shall draw up a contract between Ruth and A & R. Our usual commission on such deals is 20% (10% for films), which we should extract from money received (if any) and pass the rest on to you. For instance, when this option is signed we’ll send you £40 of the £50 paid to us.

Hope you are well and happy.

Yours ever

MSS 413
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
23 March 1959

Dear Beatrice,

Herewith *The Victorians*, finished and over to you...I hope you will read it and like it for it’s a fresh book and true to the life as lived up at Buffalo years ago, full of the wild and wooly (sic) past of Steve and Blue...Great days, Beatrice, that will never come again, mankind says, but with the gods all things are possible...and who knows, a thousand s of years from now you and I and Charlie and Blue and the rest of them will still be Greek masking it on this earth, this Australia that I love so well.

Anyhow, read *The Victorians* and write and tell me what you think of it...it follows right on the heels of WILD AUSTRALIA and after it comes *The Golden Wattle Warriors* which is to go on the roster next and be worked on...

But I have much pleasure in sending this book over, dear Beatrice, and hope you grow fond of it. Keep it for me, for I’ve a copy and shall be glad if you’ll care for the MSS until you want to use it...

It has quite a lot of early verse in it, too, that you havent read and is a living picture of the old days at Buff.

Love to yourself and Nan and Eric and the dear girls who always turned on the tea for Eve

MSS 415
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
23 March 1959

Dear Beatrice,

I am sending over my new book “THE VICTORIANS” by boat to you and hope it arrives safely by surface mail...

Write and let me know when it arrives and please read it and tell me what you think of it...

I am awfully busy writing four books at once and making a good job of them all. Its material, Beatrice, that I simply have to get rid of on to you before I go abroad to live, I hope, in England. I am in touch with the Rev. Lloyd Gedge, once of Auckland Wharf Police (theyre awfully nice) and now a priest of Headington, Oxfordshire and I intend to barge in on them complete with a tent etc and shoot it up and live around.
I have also written to the Lord Mayor of Athens in the sacred name of Cybele begging for a small ancient hut somewhere on the shores of Piraeus where I can live and write as in ancient days and the rest of it...my dear dove...I know you will understand...the heat here today is really miserable, tropical and up from the islands like a breath of Tahiti and Nukulofa...

Hoping you get the book safely,
yours with love to all

MSS 417
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
24 March 1959

Dear Beatrice,

Just got your lovely letter this morning when I had posted off the MSS of “The Victorians” to you, and I am so pleased and happy to think that Ruth Part, our Ruth is going to put our play “The Pea Pickers” on the stage...

Not the Coles Book Arcade note of our comment? The rainbow, at last, dear Beatrice, of hope...I do really think that it’s a great idea and tell Ruth I simply love her for it...and hope she doesn’t get caught up in any great chaotic backwashes from my brain making her feel uncertain...Tell her the time is here and now...and I hope she goes ahead with it...I saw Darcy’s play “The Shiralee” and loved it dearly...

I’m sure she will make a wonderful, a magnificent hob of it...and I’d simply love her adaptation of it, really, because I just can’t write plays at all, you know, and I’m sure SHE could. How utterly wonderful! At last, some one has decided to take up the rusty bugles of the pea-pickers and blow a defiant note on them. Well, let us see...Charlie, of course, swore that they’d make a play of it and hung around waiting to be employed as hero, but no one came to employ him...

It ought to go well over the radio and TV too. Tell her to go right ahead and may all the genius of Clio, the Muse of History and Humor, fire the girl with genius to produce something the Greeks would be proud of. As for me, by Cripes, I’ll put the L40 next to the L20 now at the Union Shipping for my fare home to the old Dart.

Love from

MSS 421
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
15 April 1959

Dear Eve,

Just to tell you that “The Victorians” has safely arrived, and that I look forward very much to reading it. Fancy your being engaged on four books at once! And feeling you must finish them all before you go abroad to live. I shall be most curious to know what the Lord Mayor of Athens says in reply to Cybele’s request. So glad to know how pleased you were at the idea of Ruth’s musical play. We really should say nothing whatever about it publicly for the time being. The moment to start shouting will be when Ruth has not only completed the play but placed it with some brilliant and reputable producing company.

Nan is on holidays, but I know she would send her love, as I do.

Yours

MSS 423
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
27 April 1959

Dear Beatrice,

I was glad to get your letter and hope you’ll like The Victorians. I got the £115 and went in and put it down on my fare to London and shall be leaving here on the 28th of August and shall be in Sydney on the 1st of September and see you all then before my boat, the Orion sails next day for Tilbury. I’ll bring over The Golden Wattle Warriors for you, too, if possible...

As you can imagine, I shall be glad of any further cash available, my dove. And when I get to England you’ll be my one thought till I get settled down in some ancient house or other as I won’t be back in New Zealand for a long while, I hope.

Mac Vincent of the Auckland Star gave the play and me and Ruth a good write up, for a start, as he likes Pea Pickers very much. Hope it goes well, but I shall hear from you about in England, anyhow.

Love to you and Nan and Eric and all from

170
MSS 419
Angus & Robertson MSS received 8/4/59
Eve Langley: The Victorians, Readers report
June 5 1959
TO PHOTOCOPY

MSS 425
Reader’s Report on Wild Australia
Author Eve Langley
Title: Wild Australia

Report on Revised copy: I have read this revised copy with great enjoyment, but although I am an
everenthusiast for the writings of this author I feel I cannot reverse my earlier opinion on the MS. As some
years have passed since I first read it (in 1953) I find it difficult to discover what passages exactly have
been altered – with one exception: Oscar Wilde has now been almost entirely excised from it. This is
certainly an improvement as in that respect the first version was almost repellingly fantastic – or I felt it
to be so. I think Eve Langley has probably added a good deal in its place – the revised version still
numbers 517 pp or quarto.

Steve’s ride over the Alps carries the reader along very well and there is some beautiful, and some
marvellous comic writing in all this. This part of the MS has at least a thread, but after Steve rejoins
Blue at the hop-picking (p. 254) there is a sense of anti-climax which lasts right through to the end. As
before I find all this later part rather disappointing – as though Eve Langley is using material from
which she has already rubbed away the gold in The Pea-Pickers and White Topee.

There is so much originality, even I almost think, genius, in Eve Langley’s writing that I feel the MS
must be preserved, even though it would be unwise to publish it now. The same difficulty, I remember,
aroised over “Bancroft House”. I would like to read it again to make sure but I am wondering, if and
when we are to publish another Eve Langley, whether Bancroft House might not be considered a more
possible choice.
R B (28.6.59)

TO PHOTOCOPY IN FULL ‘...I am wondering, if and when we are to publish another Eve Langley,
whether Bancroft House might not be considered a more possible choice.’

MSS 427
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
14 July 1959

Dear Eve,
Enclosed is our cheque for LNZ 50.0.0, being the payment made by Ruth Park in taking out the option
on the dramatic, film and TV rights of The Pea Pickers. Will you please sign the attached receipt and
return it to us?

It is exciting news that you are actually booked to go to London in the Orion and we look forward very
much to seeing you on 1st September before you board the ship. We shall also be able to have a talk
about “Wild Australia” and “The Victorians” - both rather “difficult” books from the general public’s
point of view, but with some lovely stuff in them: for there is only one Eve Langley.

Looking forward to seeing you,
Yours affectionately

MSS 429
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
23 July 1959

Dear Beatrice,
Typewriters gone bung. Much sorrow and rage, also short letter. Thanks for cheque, receipt enclosed.
O, ungracious machine, so like myself, when thou art crook so too am I! Ah, Beatrice, what means this
“general public” note?

But, the two books are alright with you, anyway. I hope to see you soon, if I get my passport, vaccine
and also my pension fixed up. Otherwise, I don’t know...Thanks and love anyhow from

Yours ever

MSS 431
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
19 August 1959

Dear Beatrice,

I don’t think I’ll be sailing on the 28th of Aug and be in Sydney on the 2nd of Sept as I said, for my letting the house plans have fallen through and I can’t get hold of my birth certificate and I am pestered by having to get the anti small pox vaccine for Ceylon, so what, my dove… However, I’ll sail in March, I think, and be at the Roman Games in Italy in 196… I mean 1960, so will see you on the way to them. However, Beatrice, the cold weather is so beastly and the windy seas of August and September, cold and grey make me indifferent, as you will understand. I also broke down the typewriter on the last four books, and have just got it back. I’ll send over my finished book, “Last, Loneliest, Loveliest” to you soon and that will do in stead of me, until I come. Write again when you can, and get ready for the deluge of 3 more books, one about Australia and two about New Zealand.

With love to all of you from

MSS 433
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
12 October 1959

Dear Beatrice,

Here is my newest book, THE LAND OF THE LONG WHITE CLOUD, written for you… I think you will like it and put it by for publication in years to come…

It is a book that can wait, I suppose, and will be quite good reading in the future. Anyhow, read it, tell me what you think of it and put it away and keep it safe for me.

I shall send over the other book, LAST, LOVELIEST, LONELIEST” next month to you… I still have the Asiatic flue and am not very well at present but still going to England if I can. Love to all from

MSS 435
Memorandum from Mr Hughes, Editorial Department
24 August, 1959

The Pea Pickers by Eve Langley

You may be interested to know that this book will be reviewed in a half-hour dramatization (sic) in the A.B.C.’s “Land and Its People” session on 2BL, Friday 30th October.

MSS 437
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
9 September 1959

Dear Eve,

Just to tell you how disappointed we all were when you did not turn up on your way to England last week as we had expected. What with cold weather and your broken typewriter you appear to have been having a rather dreary time, and I do hope things are better for you now.

It is good to know that you are writing so freely and happily. I love the title, “Last, Loneliest, Loveliest”.

With love

MSS 439
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
12 October 1959

Dear Beatrice,

An air mail letter to tell you that I am going to put my new book “LAND OF THE LONG WHITE CLOUD” on board a boat and ship it to you… Hope you’ll like it. All about my wild wanderings from Paekakariki to Wanganui in the North Island. Full of color and New Zealanders and bits of an old journal kept in those days. Fine prose, too, very godlike and cloud filled and sparkling with imagination… read it and let me know what you think of it. And put it aside and keep it safe for me, since I have a copy of it on my perpetual pink of the Pinkerton days as trivial as Madame Butterfly.

Love from

MSS 441
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
19 October 1959

Dear Beatrice,

I am just going to pack up the latest book, “LAST LONELIEST, LOVELIEST” or the other way round as you like it...its all about my life over on the North Shore in Auckland and full of rich warm glowing material from a journal kept in those days of marriage to an artist husband and a batch of children as well...Keep the book, put it away, wont you? It follows on the heels of these others I am sending you after awhile...You will get the Land of the Long White Cloud, soon. Then comes, “DEMETER OF DUBLIN STREET”, followed by “THE COLOSSUS OF RHODES STREET”...then “THE OLD MILL” and this one I am sending to you “Last, Loneliest, Loveliest,” although I put it as “Last, Loveliest, Loneliest” as it goes in some anthologies, don’t you think? Well, after this one comes, “REMOTE, APART”, to be followed by “PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AT CHELSEA’ and then, “THE SAUNTERERS’ and “BEAUTIFUL ISLES OF THE SEA’ and lastly “APOLLYON REGIUS”...

Two books come in between, ontrroducing to you, THE LAND OF THE LONG WHITE CLOUD, and these are THE NIMROD TYPE and “THE AUSTRALIAN”. but I have to copy them out, although they are all written and Nan has read them both for me for I took them over to Sydney with me when I came...

So that’s 8 to come, no, 9 with GOLDEN WATTLE WARRIORS, no 11, with The Nimrod Type and The Australian...sounds a bit weird, but that’s how it is...No, its 10 books to come...just put them away somewhere, got to get rid of all the material in hand...yous (sic) in love, Eve

MSS 443
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
20 October 1959

Dear Beatrice,

I am sending over by surface mail, the book I promised you, “Last, Loneliest, Loveliest!”, and trust you will get it safely...I hope you will like it and put it by and look after it for me, as it is part of a long list of books...not very long, really, that I am writing about New Zealand...I still have the Asiatic flu’, so badly and feel horribly sick but have spent the days correcting the book and send it over to you...

If my health doesn’t improve I’m afraid I’ll have to sling the trip to England to the winds and return to Australia to live, for this cold wet damp country is getting me down utterly, and from what Ian Mudie of S.A. told me, England is far worse than New Zealand...wet all year round with hunks of snow chucked in for good measure, and I just couldn’t stand that...So for healths sake I’ll just have to pack up after Christmas and come right back to Australia...I am on the look out for a house now and have written all over the place to agents, and if you know of anyone who has a place for about L500 or up to L1,000, let me know, and I can put down a deposit on it and buy it and live over in Australia, for this country does nothing but rain, day and night...I tell you, what, Beatrice, if you could send me over one of the Sydney papers with a list of small properties in them I’d be so grateful as I don’t get a chance to see one here...

I feel so ill today that I just want to pack up and come straight back to Australia, and that I shall do after Christmas, without fail...for its too wet here for words, just soakingly damp and unhealthy all year round. So, dear Beatrice, if you can HELP a very sick writer to find a house to buy and live in, I’ll be so glad,...up in the Blue Mountains would do, too.

Love from yours ever,

MSS 445
Manuscript Review
Manuscript submitted 27/10/59
Report 14/12/59
Eve Langley
The Land of the Long White Cloud
READERS REPORTS

This is shapeless rigmarole. Though offered to us as something to be published in the future, it follows on “The Pea Pickers” and is written under the assumption that all readers will not only have read “The Pea Pickers” but remember it in detail. Even now it does not make sense and will be more hopeless later on. We are expected to know a crowd of people by their bye-names and to be interested in everything they o. But chiefly it is the wandering and confused extracts from a daily journal in which the author sets down whatever comes into her head, including her love affairs. There is one with a young man who had lovely teeth. They were artificial but still lovely, and he gave her “clean kisses” and then like all the other men who have interested her, cooled off and left her. No wonder. She travels steerage to NZ,
sitting on orange crates all the way, and walks in unexpectedly on her relatives. She deliberately makes this visit as surprising as she can (only wishing she had a disguise with black whiskers!) and as a result her sister has "a bad turn" and has to get the local nurse in. Her baby is born next day, but Eve Langley does not seem responsible in her attitude to what she has caused. She merely takes over her sister's bedroom and writes a note to the hospital to say she won't be visiting her. Then as there "is too much housework going on" she goes off to the beach. It is the aimless chronicle of an irresponsible person who follows her own moods till they run her into misery, but never considers she has any duty to anyone. THERE IS NOTHING HERE FOR THE GENERAL READER Eric

REPLY: Can only repeat what I wrote of "Last, Loveliest, Loneliest", that it is to rambling in construction, too personal and introspective to gain the interest of the general reader.

Report 2 I agree with the criticism from above, but I should add that there are touches of brilliance, and there is interest in Eve Langley's responses to the New Zealand landscape. N McD

MSS 447
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
5 November 1959

Dear Eve,

"The Land of the Long White Cloud" has safely arrived, and we look forward to reading it; and now we are waiting for the MS of "Last, Loneliest, Loveliest", which you say, in your letter of 20th October, was being sent by surface mail.

We were all so sorry to hear you had been ill with Asiatic flu, and that the cold wetness of the climate has seemed so unbearable. If only you could find the right sort of place at the right price in Australia! There would certainly be nothing within cooee of Sydney for from L500 to L1000. I am afraid. However, I will keep my eyes open, and Eric Russell will be sending you the Saturday House and Land pages from the Sydney Morning Herald. The Blue Mountains might be the most likely, or what about Gippsland, and your old haunts? Could you perhaps write to your friends there?

Hoping that you are feeling much better, and with love from us all.

Yours

MSS 449
READERS REPORT
MS OF LAST, LONELIEST, LOVELIEST SUBMITTED 12.11.59

This babbling reveals a pathetic break-down more fit for the psychiatrist's couch than the publisher. It is purely personal and though there are traces of sensitive response to visual images, there is a most insensitive lack of reticence in her most private affairs. The writing is plastered with adjectives. We read (with disgust) that the author's husband, Hilary, has "Cossack hair, short thin dark beard and above his red mouth his luxuriant eyes stared at me appreciatively." She as 11 books written and she is copying them out for us. They are "full of rich warm glowing material". Most of it seems to be the sort of material that people keep to themselves. There is part of an Italian play included here, account of the birth of her son, a rave "about Booby Breen singing that sickly "Rainbow on the River," and a mass of other shreds and patches. VERY SAD AND QUITE HOPELESS. Eric

REPLY:

Most of the material used in this book is of too purely personal nature to interest the general reader, who as a rule wants a definite theme rather than a stream of impressions and looks to the author to sort the intake of observation and emotional response into some kind of patter, reasonably coherent and therefore memorable.

Report 2. I agree that this is shapeless and much too introspective, but I think that Eve Langley's old brilliance and originality are not entirely lacking though there is not enough of them to make the MS worth publishing. I think the first report somewhat over-emphasises the author's interest in sex. NMcD

MSS 451
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
9 December 1959

Dear Beatrice,

I got a note saying that Last, Loveliest, Loneliest had arrived and that you'd let me know about it...hope you like it anyhow...I have almost finished the one that comes just before it, THE OLD MILL, and shall send it over to (sic) this month. It's a very good book, the life of fantastic artists and writers living
around the old wind mill right in Auckland, years ago... I think you'd like this book, its quaint and interesting...

I didn't get Erics papers as promised, but I am coming over to live in Australia soon, anyhow, as far as I know, and then on to the Roman Games in June from Sydney... and so will make a marvellous year of it, if, my dove, it comes through alright.

I felt sick but am much better, since I got the injections for that cold and am now alright again... I am also writing a lovely book, springlike and faerie, called Demeter of Dublin Street, all about Wanganui and you'd like the poetry of it... Lovely weather here, and I suppose Karl Marx my son will be out for the holidays... I am so busy writing and working that I shall have to put down the tasks and entertain the youth, I suppose with what energy I've got about,

Merry Christmas to you from
Eve in Type and Eve in Ink...

MSS 453
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
14 December 1959

Dear Beatrice,

Here's The Old Mill... hope you like it... Much as one says,

"Guardi mi fece... il Ponto Vecchio sono..."

"Guardi made me... I am the Old Bridge...

I am writing to let you know the novel is on the way...

Merry Christmas to all

From

MSS 455
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
14 December 1959

Dear Beatrice,

I am posting THE OLD MILL, my new novel to by the post tomorrow if its not too wet to go into Auckland... so keep an eye out for it, as it will be on its way over to you soon...

Hope you like it... It is very wet here and I should like to be in Australia for the Xmas, as it is dull this year over in NZ.

However, as I said in other letter, may be over to lice over there in New Year is possible... but who can tell one day from another... You never know what may intervene in that wish... You didn't send over the paper but I hope to get it yet...

Yours ever, ... my love...

Eve

Merry Xmas to all,
Appendix 10

Manuscripts 1960-74

Manuscripts: 1960

MSS 459
Manuscript Report
Submitted date 6 January 1960
Author: Eve Langley
Title: The Old Mill

[Addressed to Miss Davis, no acknowledgment.]

In the long and incoherent series of this writer's self-revelations which she styles novels, this must be an earlier item than the last that came through to me, for she is eagerly pursuing the artist Hilary, who was her semi-detached husband in the other book. It is clear he did not want her, but towards the close of this volume, she has worn out the patience of her friends and is removing to a miserable cabin on the hill, and Hilary is obviously weakening. It is all very sad and useless and full of the foolish vanity that boasts of every compliment. Hilary is the reincarnation of Rembrandt, in spite of his "Russian hair", but one gathers he thinks better of himself than that. Every thing is larded with adjectives - I have counted seven to one subject - Hilary, and even the least of his art school friends, are full of burning genius, all women are mysteriously lovely, except a malevolent few, and even doors and tables are "lovable". Wearisome and full of repetition. Nothing much happens in all this spate of words. Writing is very bad - clumsily split infinitives, such phrases as "an empty bottle of chianti", and the repeated "Vae Victus!" (sic) in her rambling about war. Incidentally, she has joined the Roman church and bought herself a "lovely pearl rosary" at the chain store. Poor thing.

Eric R

QUITE IMPOSSIBLE.

REPLY: The writer has pursued her private line of thought and emotion to the point where she moves in a world of her own, governed by values not recognised b others, and lighted exclusively by her own temperament. Thus she has completely lost touch with potential readers, who cannot see matter for interest in the host of small details with which she is engrossed.

Report 2. I think the above report is too severe; certainly the work has many faults, and is shapeless, but there are good things in it here and there. However, I agree that it is hardly publishable. N McD (Nan McDonald)

MSS 459
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
7 January 1960

Dear Eve,

So glad to hear from you and to know that you are writing so happily and so prolifically - though heaven knows when we shall be able to publish all these so attractively titled novels. (The MS of "The Old Mill" arrived, thank you.) The point is that you, with your genius for poetry and fantasy, are a writer for the few who are capable of appreciating you gifts. This may mean that we shall have to ask for Commonwealth Literary Fund backing for the next novel we do: and I wonder which ought to come next? Nan and I shall talk it over.

So sorry that New Zealand is being so dull and dreary and wet and cold. I hope this will be a happy year for you, wherever you may be.

With love from us all

MSS 461
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis

176
13 January 1960

Dear Beatrice,

Thank you for the letter. I feel so amused to think of you and Nan wondering what to do with all those books. Now, my dove, I told you to store them for me, at least, so don’t worry about publishing them. Glad The Old Mill arrived safely. I don’t think those books are awfully fantastic, dear, since they’re just about quite extraordinary life as it used to be lived in Auckland.

But you do what you please about them. I shall send you one more, dear Beatrice, just one... no more. Its called Demeter of Dublin Street, and you could read it and store it away with the rest. But you know, I havent many more books to write since I intend to give up writing after a while... so don’t worry about the works with you. They can wait, as you know...

Anyhow, I’ll probably be with you in February as I am coming over to Australia then. I have a great chum here, Roger Mellisop, a lawyers son, and every time I get ready to travel Roger comes out, nimbly, and stops me from going by advising me to put it off.

He was out on Monday advising me to put it off, but then he has a great idea that I ought to go to Italium and land on its shores as Nero returned, and Julius Caesar as well, and HE will land after awhile as Mark Antony, you see. THE great imperial broad browed Mark Antony of all time. TOGETHER, we shall live in Rome and form the basis of yet another lot of Roman scandals plus a new ROMAN EMPIRE, to entirely rule the world... my dear Beatrice, what do you think of Rogers idea.

Like Mark Antony he is a lawyers son, and tall and handsome and very nice and classically minded. But he thinks I ought to land in Rome as Nero and drive past the old Campagna in state, with a sideways look at that pale spot whereon the golden legions stood...

“Varus, Varus, give me back my golden legions!”

and then I could stay in Rome where he once wed Octavia, sister to Caesar and we should totter about the imperial city looking for our old residences down Tiber way... So you see, Roger has put great ideas into my head. Although being that horrid creature called a “female” now, which might mean a mad male, I am not quite the type that could do it, do you think. Rogas is tall and so like Marcus Antoninus that you might justifiably be forgiven for thinking that he is Mark Antony reincarnated, my dear Beatrice, that is if you believe in that mode of survival...

His name Mellisop being really, I suppose, Mellisoponis, keeper of the bees, everything would hum merrily,

Your with love to all

MSS 463
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
4 February 1960

7 books I’ve gt with you now, God wot!

Dear Beatrice,

Just this one, dear creature, and then no more, for a long time. This is the book “DEMETER OF DUBLIN STREET,” that I spoke of to you last in my last letter to you.

I shant be sending you any more over for a good while as I am going to have a rest off writing now. I many be sailing for Sydney on February 18th... so love to all,

MSS 465
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
5 February 1960

Dear Eve,

I loved your last letter, and look forward to seeing you when you come over, and particularly to hearing more about the storming of Rome by you and Mellisoponis, keeper of the bees: who is also tall, handsome, and Marcus Antoninus reincarnated. I am not quite clear whether you are to be Octavia, Cleopatra or who else; but I have confidence in the capacity of you both to create a fine Roman scandal.
This is just to send you my love and to tell you we have all been thinking of you.

Yours sincerely

MSS 467
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
6 February 1960

Dear Beatrice,

Parcelled up is Demeter of Dublin Street. Hope you like the goddess. I'm so tired, by the Gods, that I'm going to take a rest off the writing game for a good while now. May be in Sydney by the Monowai of the Febr 18th and then on to Europe by the Orion of March 14th. Down to the hops first, I think, but tired, and will land at Naples and race up to Rome by the first chariot standing in at the wharf of Napuli and fling myself on to the columns of Home or Rome as fast as I can. And I don't want to come back to either parts of the Antipodes...want to stay in Italium per sempre, somewhere around Roma...However, don't know if it will be so, hope you like the book.

With love to all

MSS 479
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
Thursday 25 1960

Dear Beatrice,

Thank you for the charming letter about Mellsonponis, priest of the bees. Had he been Marc Antoninus now Caesar would have loved him! I am sure he would have been Julius's first favorite, [sic] although he was only his brother in law.

Well, you will have Demeter of Dublin Street, by no, but not me. I got vaccinated for transiting Colombo and am still in and out of bed with illness. I went up to Public Hospital on Tuesday and was advised to see my own doctor about it, so I am lingering around here like a sad and sick knight at arms in humid rotten autumnal wet hot weather, such as poor Auckland has never produced before. The climate here is dreadful. Not the clear heat of NSW but a wet sticky heat I cannot describe. Ah, I feel so sick, feverish and miserable, and went bright yellow with swamp fever, too. I have booked I for March 31 and April 11, per sicuro, this time, going, ready or not and meaning it, too, so you'll see me at last. Forgive sick not but the vaccination brought a fever I me and I am so ill with it.

Love to all from

MSS 481
Beatrice Davis? to Eve Langley
March 1960

Dear Eve,

Yes, "Demeter of Dublin Street" has safely arrived and taken her place with the other children of your brain.

I was sorry to hear that you have been feeling off colour, and that the vaccinations had had such a nasty effect. So you really have booked for 31 st March! I hope all goes well, and look forward to seeing you.

With love,

MSS 469
Reader's Report
Demeter of Dublin Street
25 February 1960

MANUSCRIPT SUBMITTED
DATE: 25.2.60
AUTHOR: Eve Langley
TITLE: DEMETER OF DUBLIN STREET
REPORT:
This appears to come somewhere between *The Land of the Long White Cloud* and *The Old Mill*. Steve is working in a hostel for women in Wanganui, apparently as a kind of general domestic help. "Demeter" is a cook at the hostel, whose home Steve visits, but she does not occupy a very large part of the story. In fact, there is, as usual in this series, very little story; it is principally a record of Steve's thoughts and emotions. There are again the recollections of Gippsland and the agonized yearning for the past, which I am afraid is becoming tedious, and her letters to Blue and Mia, and her poems and stories. She is apparently still more or less engaged to Ray, who is still in Australia battling with the Depression, but towards the end she goes back to live with Blue and Mia and falls in love with an Italian. The ending is inconclusive. It is all too shapeless and introspective to hold the reader's interest, though there are moments of brilliance.

Nan McDonald

**MSS 471**

Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis

1 March 1960

£50.

No. 359985. Date 10 July 1959

Bank of New South Wales, Wellington

Dear Beatrice,

That cheque you sent me last July, 1959, I've just got back from the bank. AN Bank. They sent it to the Bank of New South Wales and it was returned unpaid. It was the cheque you paid me on behalf of Ruth Park and Darcy Niland using my book *The Pea Pickers* as a play. You remember they were going to dramatise it and took out a fifteen months option? They haven't done anything with it at all so far. Anyway, I've seen no notice of it in the Bulletin.

I am taking the cheque in to the bank tomorrow to see what they say about it, and why the Bank of New South Wales won't cash it.

After they have explained it, I'll send the cheque on to you and you could write me out another. You see, I am thinking that I held on to it too long and ought to have cashed it last year. But I thought I was perfectly safe in holding on to it and using it for travellers cheques etc. What a horrid mistake! I'm so glad I didn't start out for a trip with a lot of travellers cheques off THAT cheque. It is too old, I suppose, although I thought one could keep cheques indefinitely and it didn't matter at all. Please write out a new cheque, dear one, and send it over to your ever loving, ever worried Eve.

Love to all of you from me,

Eve

**Important** Dear Beatrice, have seen the bank. They say cheque is over 6 months old and therefore, dear one, you'll have to write me out another one. Would you please do this, my dove, and send it over to me at once, when I shall dutifully bank it and that will be alright.

I'm still waiting word about my pension to come and live in NSW. If I can get the pension in Australia, I shall come over and live near you - well - somewhere out on the Central Western Plains out Manildra way where I started from

Yours ever

**MSS 473**

Miss Fisher, Editorial Department to Mrs Mackensie

MEMORANDUM

This cheque for £50 NZ was sent to Eve Langley, (779 Laingholm Drive, Laingholm Auckland New Zealand) last July - but she has only just presented it at the Bank, to be told it was "stale". So will you please cancel this and draw another cheque (authority attached).

11.3.60 Mr.? says he will include this in royalty cheque going at the end of next month.

JF will you alter my letter accordingly?

J. Fisher
MSS 475  
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley  
8 March 1960  

Dear Eve,  

We are not sending you a new cheque for £50, but shall include the amount in your royalty cheque, going off at the end of the week. Now you know, of course, that you must bank cheques immediately - but there is no need for me to go on about it. Traveller's cheques are issued by you bank from the money you have deposited. 

I hope everything works out well for you, concerning the pension and you wish to get away from New Zealand. 

With love,

MSS 477  
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis  
23 March 1960  

Dear Beatrice,  

Thank you so much for your letter about the cheque. The trouble is, my love, that you said, March 8th the royalty cheque would be sent at the end of the week, 8th March, and I havent got it yet. So I am sending you a threepenny stamp to pay for the cost of the cheque, and wish you would send it over to me, soon. I got a letter from Katoomba, Soper Bros, saying they have a small house I could have at £150 and that's so cheap that I am simply longing to get it. I sent a cable over to them, but no reply. I said I would take the place at once. And hope to Heaven it is mine, now. So, in I go tomorrow to book in again on the Monowai. She is always booked up, because she is supposed to be retiring soon, and everyone is rushing over while the going is good and the fares are cheap, you see. Hence my agony of sorrow and misery at not getting a cabin on her. 

She is booked, they said for March 31 and April 11, and so May the 20th is the last hope. I should have called on the Febr 18th of course, but would have missed out on getting the letter from Soper Bros about the house. 

Fancy only £150. I am praying it will be mine, my dear one. I shall book in on May 20th, decisively tomorrow and sail them, hoping that the house up in the Blue Mountains is mine for £150. But in the meantime, I think I ought to have the £50 for expenses and to pay for my luggage when I land in Australia, you see? Glad you got Demeter of Dublin Street. I am now, to fill in time, started on another book, "Remote, Apart." But I'll see you about it later on. No hurry. I only want a safe place to store these books, that's all. 

Yours with love to all,  
Eve  

Dear Beatrice, again more. I have got a tenant for the house; and shall really be sailing as soon as they can get my cabin on the Monowai. My dove, could you send over the £50 as soon as you can, stamp enclosed to pay for a new cheque as I want to come over with all my stuff and pay for it on board and also up to the Blue Mountains, that's if Soper Bros. have got the property I Clydebank Road for me. You see? I'm waiting on the £50 as I am broke as usual, and I must sail by May the 20th, as the Monowai will be doing a Pacific run after that date, so send the case and I shall be over, as the place is let and I have to move out, as soon as I can. I might get a boat by April 11th so over with the £50, dear one, to your ever loving,  

MSS 483  
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley  
7 April 1960  

Dear Eve,  

By now you will have had that cheque for £50, and I hope that it will help you sort out your affairs. The house for L150 on the Blue Mountains sounds almost too good to be true, and I keep wondering whether somebody did not leave a nought off by mistake. So now you will be sailing on the Monowai
on 20th May, and this will be a big step for you - though not so big a one perhaps as going to Rome to live forever on one of its hills.

Let us know if there is anything we can do for you in the meantime.

Love from us all,

MSS 485
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
25 April 1960

Shades of schooldays at Crossover in Gippsland, 1915 or something. “Now, children, I want you all to write an essay on Anzac Day At Gallipoli?” Hooray. And I won five bob. Thank you for the cheque, Beatrice dear. I got it and banked it. But my dove, do you know what? That place up in the Blue Mountains is now mine for £75! Only £75! Isn’t land cheap in Australia now? Yes, so I sent over £25 at once, and shall sail by the Monowai on the 20th and draw up at the door with the belongings on board as in On Our Selection, that’s if Coper Bros send over saying that all is well.

Yes, I’ll be over, alright. Roger will follow I hope. I don’t know, however. Spose he will. He said he would. My dove, I am just rotten with bad colds here, and the climate is getting me down. I go and work in the gully and next morning my face is bright yellow as with malaria and I cough and cough all day and feel so cold. I won’t wait for the hideous accompanying snakes to come. I’ve heard tell of them. Well, I can’t work for I’m too sick and my writing is off for the season due to the cold, but I’ll be over on the next Monowai and shall see you all then. I’m also booked in on the Patris for Miraeus, but don’t know if I’ll go or not. It will depend on if this cold gets better or not. Feel horribly sick with a bad cold all the time. Nagging brute of a thing that won’t go at all, and I’ve had seven injections for the brute, too. However, who cares? Shall see you in May.

Love to all from

MSS 487
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
4 May 1960

Dear Eve,

I am so glad to hear about the land - or is it a gouse? - in the Blue Mountains that you will be coming to when you arrive on the Monowai. But I am horrified to hear you sounding so ill with colds and coughs. I hope you have somebody to look after you and to bully you into keeping warm and doing all the right things to conquer the wretched affliction. This is just to tell you we are thinking of you and looking forward to seeing you.

With love from us all,

Yours

MSS 489
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
Saturday 14 1960

[Handwritten note on letter: J.F. Could you ring the shipping people on Monday 23rd and see if Eve is on the Monowai?]

Dear Beatrice,

I’ve got my ticket and will sail on Friday next, hooray! First class on the Monowai with all my bags for Australia. The place up at Katoomba, is called Iona Lympus and (Australian Greek, that is) and is a house, 4 roomed and land, 50 by 150, same as here, for £75, my dove.

I have paid down £30 and have £40 odd to pay, so I am just waiting for the sales and conditions to arrive back after I’ve signed them all. Soper Bros of Katoomba have arranged the sale, and I have a great joke with their name, saying to about a thousand snakes and goannas and lizards and all sorts that lie gripping my sofa, see, like Soper, “Gettum op our soper.” See? But the animals cling all the harder and wont gettum op our Soper.

O, just think of all the goannas and lizards and snakes I’ll bee feeding on the fat of the land up there for the long years to come! I’ll cling to Australia after this.
I'll see you as soon as the Monowai berths in Sydney Harbour. I'll come right up to see you, but I think it'll be a sort of On Our Selection visit, with pots and pans and all the old stuff out of the old place when Dad and the family shifted to the new place. On our New Selection. Gods, what names. The Dashwoods. Sandy. Dave. Joe. I'll land with all the old outback traditions on board, in the track of some old joker that trailed his family and goods down the Castlereagh and up into the Blue Mountains to settle around Katoomba in the eighties. That'll be me. Cant you see Joe running behind, trailing a goanna in the dust? Dave sitting on top of the load, and Dan, with a gum tree twig in his mouth, watching Dad lift the kerosene tin off the bag of sugar. too late, alas. That's what my grandfather did when he shifted the family from Ballarat to Munro up in Gippsland. Well, Beatrice, I've put in my application for the Invalid Pension in your letter and beg of you to sign the cards for me and append your signature as an elector of the Commonwealth in my appeal. I MUST get that pension and stay in Australia, because my lungs are awful here and I never stop coughing at all and am slinging up, God knows what, right and left. So DO, if you can, by your signature get my pension for me, wont you? You could post it to them before I arrive or after. The envelope is free and don't need a stamp, as Dad, would say when Dan asked him for money for the stamp to post a letter outback. I feel so sick. So riddled with this cold. So ill in all ways, that I'm just waiting like god knows what to shift off out of the country. The radio announcers seem to know me by heart and stare at me through the radio with their electric eyes as though saying, "What? Arent you gone yet?" And such lovely songs, too, such a spirit I've brought to the country, as though I were Atua, the Maori god....My gosh, what a wild creature I am now. Let me get back and be Steve Langley again and drop the past behind me in the lovely blue bush. Roger, refuses to come out to see me, even, and swears only that if he leaves me alone, I'll have to leave the NZ and come over to Aussie. And he SWEARS that he will follow me, like Mark Antony to Cydnos, although where Cleo is, I don't know. Anyhow he is coming over too, so you may see him yet. He will have to wade down a track full of snakes and goannas and lizards I tell him. Well, Beatrice, will you please fill in the enclosed form faithfully and send it to the Dept, to The Director, Social Services Consolidated, Australia House, 50 Carrington St., Gods, I don't want anything to keep me back, this time, and am all ready to go. Anyhow whatever happens I'm sailing on the Monowai next Friday, without fail.

No, I don't want anyone to look after me, I just want to clear out of this country and fly to Australia. See you later, love to all

Eve

NB Don't forget to read and sign the enclosed appeal for pension. If you liked you could recommend me for the pension in a short note and tell them I'm girt-broke??? otherwise - cos you know, my books don't bring in muck. Theyre so ? fantastic.

MSS 493
Beatrice Davis to The Director, Social Services Consolidated, Australia House, Sydney
18 May 1960

Dear Sir,

One of the firm's authors, Eve Langley Clark, has written from New Zealand, sending the enclosed application for an invalid pension. She has asked me to witness her signature and to send the form on to you: and since I know this to be her signature I have duly signed my married name and home address. Having corresponded with Eve Langley for over 20 years, I can assure you of her bona fides. She has no income that I know of (the sale of her two books having ceased, except for a "remainder" at much reduced price on which no royalty is paid); and she has been in ill-health for some time.

Mrs Clark intends to sail from New Zealand on the Monowai on 20th May, and, knowing how little money she will have, I should like to do anything I can to help her secure the pension as soon as possible. Perhaps you would be good enough to let me know (so that I can tell her when she arrives) what further steps she will have to take. Could I, for instance, make an appointment for her with an officer of your department?

Yours faithfully,

MSS 495
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
1 June 1960

Dear Eve,

We have naturally been thinking of you and wondering how you have settled in to your Blue Mountains house. Have also been anxious about the cough and the pain in your chest, hoping that you have found a good local doctor to advise about treatment. Please, when you can, let me know how you are.

I wonder, too, whether you have heard from the Pensions people; and, if you have not, whether you would like me to try to see someone personally in the Department. As to the refunding of your fare on the *Patris*: I hear that there should be no difficulty. You could write to a Mr J. P. Griffiths of the Union Steamship Co, 254 George Street - to whom we have spoken about this problem. He says that if you state the case, and let him know in your letter the name and place of your Bank in New Zealand, he would organize the payment of the money into your New Zealand bank, from which it could be transferred to Katoomba.

I hope the weather is sunny and windless, and not too horribly cold.

With love

MSS 497

LIST OF BOOKS

MSS 499
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
9 June 1960

Dear Beatrice,

I am settled well ??? of the blue tongue lizards and the tiger snakes and Sydney wattles waratah at above address. Please forward all mail of New Zealand or hostile character to Jean??? The house is great. An English writer artist whose brother has wonderful cats, a book of which I have, all entire original and a father who has left a marvellous painting of the Blue Mountains, has added the fence and the wattles. The ? lovely ? and currawongs, the ? is really lovely? Australia, Felix, or Australia Beatrix, is home to the wandering exile and I wish I'll (sic) never ever left it. Love to Tan and ? Nan all everyone from Steve

MSS 501
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
Thursday 14 1960

Dear Beatrice,

Thank you so much for your letter. I am so down to it, I can scarcely write. I got the house alright I think, but have to get Mr Crooks signature to 2nd document yet in London. But think will be alright. But no pension yet. And I can get the £123 from the Union Steam, thank your friend Mr Griffiths for the advice. But I am paying Karl Marx, my youngest sons fare over here. He leaves by Wagenalla on 22nd July and get here on 26 so. I feel so tired and sick. Dr said my chest is alright. I hope so anyhow. Cough has goyne. But feel ill all the time. Am waiting for pension. Wish you could do something for me there at the Dept. I wrote to Mr Jenkins of the Dept. He is Director of it and have had my reply. I wrote today and will post it with yours today or tomorrow. You could see him if I don't get the P. within a fortnight. I will write and let you know at once when it comes.

I've lost £18 now through leaving that hideous NZ. I wont go back. I wont go back for anything. I hate the horrible place and everyone in it. But Mr Paul of the Social Security Dept saw I got my pension, you see. Well, Beatrice, nothing to say, but illness and no money at all much, bar the rest of the shipping case. Got to pay £11 to the lawyers for transfer fees out of that. I am writing to the USS to get the cash sent over to AI1Z Bank here.

I am desperately asking the Director of Soc services here to give me the pension. I have begged for it, really. I wont go back to NZ.

I feel so ill, I can't keep going. Have to write Karl and June yet and Uss. So do what you can for me with the Soc Services Dept, Beatrice, dear, if you don't get word that I havent got the Pension.

It is wet and cold here. I left NZ because of the horrible hideous and incessant ain, and by the look of it Australia is just going to be as wet and hideous and horrible with all the rotten stuff pouring down all
over the earth, the outback won't be out of the rotten stuff, the rain, while I am about. Its funny, but all
my life, where ever we lived in Australia we always lived under a shower of rain. In fact, where ever I
am you'll find the hideous rain pouring down and down on my head. Ah well, suppose its better than
the drought, my love.

Oh, for a cup of coffee and a yarn with you all, a yarn I mean, not a yen. Love to you all, Eric and Nan
and the rest from sobbing Steve. I wish I could go out pea picking, but don't feel well enough these
days. Karl Marx will cheer me up however. O, I do so love Australia. Out getting wood. Seeing holes
that look like snake holes. Seeing birds, hearing the wattle bird. "Go back, go back." Then, "Don't go
back." Hearing the kookaburra. Hearing the crows. But oh, to hear the cash is all. Funny, you know,
money is a great and wondrous thing. You can't do without it.

Love to all. Get in touch with Dept if I don't write within 3 weeks to say I got the P.

Steve

MSS 503
Eric Russell Eve Langley
25 July 1960

Dear Eve,
Beatrice is rather busy at the moment and has asked me to drop you a line about your pension.
The other day I went up to the head office of the Social Services Department in Sydney and asked them
what was happening about your pension. The man I saw there, after explaining that it was a matter
entirely between the Department and yourself (it has really nothing to do with Angus & Robertson)
nevertheless very kindly went into it and was able to tell me in the end that you should not have much
longer to wait. He said to tell you that if, for any reason, your pension does not arrive within the next
few weeks, you should get in touch with the Social Services Department at Lithgow. Katoomba is in
their area. Let us know when it comes, won't you?
I hope you are feeling much better now. You should be taking in great gulps of fresh mountain air and
basking in the sunshine up there away from it all. Sometimes, if you look down toward the coast you
will be able to see a dirty smudge above the horizon: that will be Sydney, the big smoke. That's where
we are.
Beatrice sends her regards

MSS 505
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
28 July 1960

Dear Beatrice,
Karl got here on Tuesday and left for Queensland yesterday very pleased with Australia. I am still
waiting for the Pension and haven't even had word from the Social Services Department about it. I have
found the builders receipts and see that the cost of the bach or house was only £300 not £600, and this
with the value of the land at £297 makes it all only worth £672 in all, and makes me free of the Means
Test. Since I am letting the place and have not got the rent yet, and its only £1 per week, I really think I
ought to have the Invalid Benefit. Dr Kenneth Jones of Katoomba examined me and said I would get
the pension as did the Social Services Registrar from Lithgow.

I do wish you could send see someone in the Department and put in a word for me and mention too that
the real cost of the NZ place was only £672, from the builders estimate. If you could only help me to
get the pension I would be so glad, as I couldn't face up to living on what I get from writing and poetry.
I shall close now, as I feel quite sad and not very well, but shall stay on in Australia and collect the Old
Age pension. Quite happily, I suppose, but until then I shall have to get a grocery order from the Social
Services and call it quits.

Love to all from Eve

MSS [no number]
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
July
Dear Beatrice,

Just got letter from dear Eric! Thank him so much for calling at the Social Services Dept. They told him I ought to get the pension soon - or if not to write to Social Services, Lithgow. My love, I feel so much happier and in better spirits - already!

Dear one, to have to write for a living and live on precarious royalties would be just too much for poor old Eve. Lovely day up here. We had snow on Wed last. Karl arrived clad in a glorious black suit and a flame red shirt, he is tall and alert and very handsome, but has taken it all away to Queensland - to impress the Far North!

MSS 507
Eve Langley to Eric Russell
24 August 1960

Dear Eric

I am glad to say that I have got word from Lithgow and the Invalid Benefit Pension is mine! I get £192 per annum, because the place in NZ ??from it makes it less. I got £234 in NZ.

But I'd rather have the £192 and remain in Australia as you ?know. Tell Beatrice I am to get the initial payments soon. I have a cold in the face due to the snow as I have not been in from country before???

But I am so glad to get the pension. For to live by the pen is so dreadful, miserable, don't you think?

Best love to you all & Beatrice from Eve

MSS 509
LIST OF BOOKS (same as previous)

MSS 511
LIST OF BOOKS
(as above)

MSS 513
Eric Russell to Eve Langley
7 September 1960

Dear Eve,

We were very pleased to hear that you will be getting the Invalid Benefit Pension at last: this is very good news and you must be quite relieved.

Sorry to hear about your cold. I hope you have shaken it off by now; a few lungfuls of fresh mountain air every morning might be a help. And in a short while the weather should start to warm up and the days will become much warmer and more pleasant.

I quite agree with you on your comments on living by the pen (or the typewriter). Unless you are prepared to be a hack it is a rather lonely battle.

Anyway, Eve, it is good to hear that you have practically got your pension, that you have got a house and that you want to stay in Australia - Aussie isn't such a bad place.

All the best,

MSS 515
Eve Langley to Eric Russell
19 September '60

Dear Eric,

Thanks for the kindly letter. I got the Pension cheque with it on the same day. By cripes, I am glad alright.

She's wonderful up here in the Blues. Never knew there were such a lot of different flowers around. I send a lot over to Blue each time I write to her.

These eff and baconers we used to pick when young. The purple sasparilla and the white heath. Australia! I'd rather be here on $1 a week or grass and water than NZ.

Every breezy morning you get up with the spring winds roaring silver through the gums, the blue gums of Australia, you feel a million.
I am better now. But have got a backache. I have a bet, with crisscross wire on it and it always reminding (sic reminding?) me in the morning when I get up of the window of Wm (sic William?) Shakespeare's house at Avon. The casement criss cross is on the vaguely French tan red roses there on the mattress. This gives me a backache, but have to see Dr Boyd of Kat. About it. He'll fix her. The house inside is apart. Red and white lino like the hall, maybe, in which Paris first met Helen at a grand ball in Britain. Hey? How I trail on with my stories of the past.

I have got 3 sheep. And some joker has slung in another one. Got a white face like a stray parson. I tell the stray that he used to be a Congregational minister that preacher to a bush congregation at Goanna Creek in the old days.

But thank God, I haven't got to write a living. By the way, Does Miss IIiffe, or Mr still have all those vols of Pea pickers 2nd edition on hand. For I'll have them as was promised long ago. Bit smoky in this here house for books, but if still there will take em. By the gods, it is good to be in Australia. I am so glad, with a capital G I did not go to the Ludi Romani. And then on to icy Britain. Better home in the pea paddocks.

If I had felt well enough I would've gone down to Bathurst for the peas, and also to Orange, and then on to Forbes for the beans. But don't feel too well yet. Have lost all that fat and am now slender and flat as a board. Hooray.

I might be off to Panlooks for the hops after Xmas. Don't know for sure. Ah, Australia. You can have the rest.

So long, and best love to all,

From yours ever

Steve

MSS 517
Eric Russell to Trade Department (Mr Barry Dixon)
26 September 1960

LANGLEY: The Peapickers
As arranged by telephone, please send to this author, 25 copies of The Pea Pickers, free of charge and freight free to:
Miss Eve Langley
Iana Lympus,
Clydebank Road
Katoomba
NSW

MS 519
Eric Russell to Eve Langley
28 September 1960

Dear Eve,

Glad to hear that you are feeling like a million; you will probably be feeling like two million when summer comes to the Blue Mountains and early in the morning (about 5.30) you look down towards Sydney - which is that horrible smudge on the eastern horizon - and you pick out such landmarks as the harbour bridge and the railway click and maybe even the A.W.A Tower. By the way are your sheep good lawn mowers?

I have been in touch with Mr IIiffe's department and I have made arrangements for them to send you 25 copies of the second edition of The Pea Pickers. They should reach you sometime within the next week.

Have you planted your spring vegetables yet - or aren't you the home-garden type?

All the best from all of us here.

Yours

MSS [no number]
Eve Langley to Eric Russell
Thursday October '60
Dear Eric,
Thanks for the letter and the parcel of Pea pickers. I got them from the Railway Station. Karl Marx arrived home from the Far North on Wed, last, and looked splendid. Is now down in Sydney, and trying to get a boat for Britain or Singapore. He is so very handsome and brown with the far North tan. Was working on a sheep station at Maryvale near Barcaldine and was in Brisbane.
We bought two bottles of wine and celebrated. I've now got a very charming radio transistor of brown leather and hear all the news. The music is lovely and the radio announcers, as usual, are most lovely. I think their voices are possibly the most comforting in the whole world. Well, Eric, rain is here, the earths wet and the grass is green. The hazy purple glance of the violet wild flowers blazes in your eyes and the blue orchids and other splendours of the bush are so wonderful. Dear Australia! Such a lovely land. My love to you all and hopes of eventually getting Wild Australia published one day.
Love from

MSS 521
Eric Russell to Eve Langley
9 November 1960
Dear Eve,
What is your favourite radio programme? At this end of the world it is hard to get away from the Top Forty, which I suppose you have no trouble in receiving from 2KA, the old faithful Voice of the Mountains. Still, whether you like the Top Forty or not, there are quite a lot of entertaining things for your transistor to pick up.
Glad to hear that the parcel of copies of The Pea Pickers arrived quite safely. Is everything else going well with you? We have weathered a few storms down here, but the atmosphere seems to be clearing and with summer coming up even smoky old Sydney seems like a good spot to live in.
All the best from all of us,

MSS 523
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
7 April 1961
My dear Beatrice,
Leaving you, I walked to the tune of Selman, your home is the sea, down to Circular Quay and saw the great blue flash of the building Eric mentioned to me, and then fled over to the other Shore by ferryboat and back with one old and white frangipanni on the grew seat to keep me company. The harbour was full of its foaming frothing swans and I saw the little stone fort in the middle and was so delighted with it all.
I was down at the Sydney Show last Saturday and whiled about on the golden and glittering singing merrygoround, Paris, 1894, with the children to the tune of Moonlight and Roses. The great show is like a great city. The hot, the heated romantic atmosphere at night and the myriads of young strolling about arm and hand joined was so delightful, and so was the pink fairy floss.
The cool city in the morning and the careful way they loaded us on to our buses and sent us up those cool immemorial streets full of those delicious brown houses was wonderful. That glorious show, lit at night until one was back in the years, 1730 in old London while slender white Spenserian horses flashed with trailing white tails over the brown and green Australian earth to the great cry of "Oscar Night, riding Burrens Pride,". Don't you think that the most splendid thing ever? I do.
I had come down by morning through the dewy green flowery land, that NSW is nowadays and we rushed past many a deep green lovely garden in the sunny morning. But by night we fled through the dark enchantment of NSW with its few lights and its great roaring dark distances far off. And Katoomba was in fog when I got home.
I'm coming down again on Anzac Day, I think. Karl got back from the Far North the other day and has gone for a trip to NZ. Has been up at Cairns and not in Britain at all. Amazing.

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Well, my dove, I do so hope you can print Wild Australia, on a Govt Grant and hope, as you said you
would that you’ll see Douglas about it, anon, anon.
I should so love to have another book published, as it seems years since you published me. By the way,
aren’t the Darcy Nilands going to produce Pea Pickers, at all, at all? Write soon and let me know. But I
do hope you can give me hope of getting Wild Australia out in book form one day.
With love to you and Eric and all others, yours ever,

MSS 525
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
19 April 1961
Dear Eve,
Your descriptions of Sydney, with your poet’s second sight, make it seem a much more enchanting
place that it usually is to an inhabitant like me. I can imagine you at the Show, eating fairy floss (which
I like, too) and seeing the sights with a stranger’s eye.
I shall talk to Nan about “Wild Australia” next time she comes up from Wollongong, and get ready to
make an appeal to the Commonwealth Literary Fund for some financial help. This could not be until
next year, however, because we have far too many C.L.F. sort of books on our hands at the moment. I
do understand how you feel about wanting a further book published; and how difficult it is for you to
settle down to more writing until the books you have already written make their bow to the public.
Believe me, I shall do my very best.
Yours ever,

MSS 527
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
21 April 1961
Dear Beatrice,
Thanks so much for your kindly letter. And for the Henry Lawson paper too. I wish I could write a
poem about him and Gulgong. And I feel I should have to go to Gulgong and see the place first. I DO
hope Han and you can get that CLF finance for WILD AUSTRALIA. I know you will help me with it
anyhow.
I was wondering if you could tell me the name of a stationer in Castlereagh Street to whom I could send
some money for ream of quarto bank and quarto pink and carbon and ribbon as I usually do. I want to
start off copying out another book. I used to get all my stuff at Leightons in Auckland and miss them
so. But if you could give me the name of a stationer who would send my needs up by post to Katoomba,
I’d be so grateful. You sent me along to a stationer in Castlereagh St, I think it was, when I was over on
holidays in 1956 and I got some ribbon there. So an address of one would be so much appreciated. I
just hope you can get Wild Australia out when you are able to in order to get things moving for me, as I
feel so static without a book being published to color the days. I shall just have to start writing again in
a very colorful Persian, Arabian style, rich tapestry poetry to suit my own yearnings and feed on that
until you can help me. I know you will, at last though.
Best love from

MSS 529
MISC note, A&R, signed J.F.
1963
Eve Langley MSS removed from Strongroom at Castlereagh Street, and now filed in large carton
marked “Manuscripts” in Editorial Department, 221 George Street.

MSS 531
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
19 September 1962
Dear Beatrice,
I am sending along the new book. It is a sequel to Last, Loveliest, Loneliest, and is called Remote, Apart. I think you will like it. I hope you can put it next to the other Auckland book. As I have only about one other book to write about Auckland. The old days, I mean. These days don’t seem worth writing about. Anyhow, I hope you will keep it for me.

With love

Eve

Walter Stone is publishing The Jewboy of the Western Ports.
MSS 533
JF, A & R to Eve Langley
2 May 1961

Dear Eve,

Beatrice has just gone on holidays and has handed me your letter about the typing paper and the
carbon paper. She thought that surely it would be simpler for you to make contact with one of the
Katoomba stationers that you could go and see. However, if you do want the name of a stationer in
Sydney, we should recommend Swain and Co Pty Ltd, 123 Pitt Street.

Beatrice says she is sorry there was no time to write herself, and send you her love.

Yours sincerely,

MSS [no number]
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
20 September 1962

Dear Beatrice, I am sending you the new book, Remote, Apart. Sequel to Last, Loveliest, Loneliest.
This may be about the end of the Auckland books.

With love

MSS 535
MANUSCRIPT SUBMITTED (A&R)
Author: Eve Langley
Title: Remote, Apart
COVER PAGE

MSS 537
Reader's Report, 'Remote, Apart'
Nan McDonald

This is a further volume in Eve Langley's autobiography, or series of autobiographical novels. It
follows Last, Loneliest, Loveliest, and continues the record of the author's life in New Zealand. Like
the earlier work, it has little plot, and is mostly in diary form, the entries being for 1939 and 1940. It
begins soon after the birth of her second child, and the two children appear frequently in its pages.
Most of the story, such as it is, is concerned with her quarrels and reconciliations with her husband,
Hilary Clark, and also with their relations with their landlady, Mrs Gaussens, who is dying of cancer.
As in her other unpublished MSS., Eve Langley concentrates too much on her own thoughts, emotions
and impressions, and not enough on the other characters. Nevertheless, they are stronger here than in
some of the other books; Mrs Gaussens in particular emerges quite vividly. And, as always, the ideas
and impressions and flights of imagination, though excessively poured out, are well worth reading, with
Eve Langley's characteristic flashes of poetry and the richness of her response to colour, shapes, and
sects. Her reflections on life and death, God and her own being, grow wearisome at times, but have
moments of brilliance and profundity.

In general, I feel about this MSS. As I did about the others: it has genuine quality but is hardly
publishable as it stands, unless Eve Langley should become a literary fashion (which is not
impossible). As I think I have said before, several of these New Zealand novels could probably be cut
and shaped into one, but I do not know who would and could undertake this. And again, there would be
a problem of Libel.

MSS 539
Beatrice Davis to G.A.F, (A&R)
n.d.

This may or may not amaze you. We turned down a further novel of Eve Langley's.

MSS 541
READERS REPORT
Sequel to Remote, Apart

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This is another instalment of Eve Langley’s life with her husband, Hilary Clark, and their two children, Bisi and Langley, on the outskirts of Auckland. They move from their flat in Mrs Gaussen’s house to another house not far away, where Hilary paints, in the intervals of working at the quarry, and Eve writes and looks after the children in a haphazard way. The war is going on through all this, and comes in for frequent but thoroughly confused comment - Eve not only has the sequence of events wrong but does not even know which side she is on. They are afraid Hilary will be conscripted; he drinks too much and they quarrel a good deal. By the end of the book it appears that their marriage is breaking up.

The most important single event in the story is that Eve Wins the S.H. Prior prize for The Pea Pickers.

This is very much the same mixture as before, and I have now had too much of it to find it interesting, except in small patches. It is sad to see the sparkling stream of The Pea Pickers ending in these swamps.

As is stands, the MS is unpublishable. I have mentioned in earlier reports the possibility of one good book being extracted from several of these MSS with a similar setting, but I am afraid it is a remote one.

NMcD

MSS 543
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
14 August 1963

Dear Eve,

It is a great pleasure to be writing to you again, and to be sending you this cheque for £40. The cheque comes from Mr Joyce Goodes of Canberra in payment for a 12 months’ option on the dramatic and radio rights in The Pea Pickers. Mrs Goodes, for a start, is to give what she called “dramatic readings” in Canberra.

I often think of you and wonder how you are.

Yours affectionately

MSS 545
Beatrice Davis to Mr MacArthur (A&R)
29 May 1964

MEMORANDUM
Eve Langley - The Pea Pickers

May we please have a quote for a reprint of 2000 copies. Jacket and jacket copy could remain as in the 1958 edition (copy herewith).

We shall be applying to the C.L.F. for assistance in republishing this, so will you please work out what guarantee we would require, under Method B.

N.B. This copy of the book has been lent by Nan McDonald. If we not eventually reprint she is to receive a copy of the new printing.

MSS 547
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
14 August 1964

Dear Eve,

We are wondering what happened to a cheque for £40 we sent you a year ago - because the bank now tells us that the cheque was never cashed. It was for the option on The Pea Pickers we gave to Joyce Goodes when she first had the idea for her “dramatic readings”. And you must have lost it!

Perhaps it would be best now if we paid this money direct into your bank at Katoomba. Which bank is it, dear Eve?

Yours ever

MSS 549
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
19 August 1964

Dear Beatrice,

I was surprised to get your letter. My love, I never got any money at all from you for the Pea Pickers recital, and just didn’t know. But if you only knew I would be so grateful for that £40. My bank is the ANZ Bank in Main Street, Katoomba.

But I assure you I never got any cheque for £40 at all.

But I would be so grateful to receive it, I can tell you, as it would fit in with a plan I am working on at present. Something utterly new, for me, although they truly say that there is nothing new under the sun.

Yours with love

MSS 551
Editorial Department, Angus & Robertson to The Manager, ANZ Bank, Katoomba NSW
31 August 1964

Dear Sir,

We would be grateful if you would credit the attached cheque for £40.0.0 to the current account of Miss Eve Langley of Clydebank Road, Katoomba.

Yours faithfully

MSS 553
JF to Eve Langley
n.d.

Dear Eve,

We are so sorry you didn’t get that cheque for £40 we sent you last year - but Beatrice has asked me to let you know that we have now sent a fresh one, direct to your bank in Katoomba. We hope this will help with the wonderful new plan you are working on.

With best wishes from all of us here.

Yours sincerely

MSS 555
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
28 October 1964

Dear Beatrice,

I am so grateful for the £40 which you lodged in ANZ for me. I have booked in for Piraeus in Greece, August 2nd 1965, and of course, should be able to get away this time, easily, out of lush green flowery Australia teeming with grass, rich gardens, vegetables, fruit and wheat. I do so long to go to Piraeus, but not much to London. I thought if I could get a small pension in the Hellenes, I might be able to stay there, and write as usual. You know how I love the Greek literature.

So far; so good. I’m going to take my tent and poles and live on a farm, since I’ve got a job picking grapes, of Metaxa and co, the ancient firm of wine distillers.

If only I can remain in the Hellenes! U gave read and thought so much of George Johnstone the writer, and his charming pretty little writer wife, Charmian that I long to go and live there as they did, but they were on the island of Hydra.

I wonder if they got a pension or something from the Greek Government? Perhaps they did. And Marcel Dekyveres lovely articles on Greece and the rest of it have made me long to be off. I long to get even a small pension from the Athenians. Well, thanks so much, my dove...for the lovely £40. Addio or Heil Hitler...as you like! What a great party the 3rd birthday was. Adolf and I sat fairly together, Sewig Heiling each other all through. Had you but heard! Yours with love,
MSS [no number]
Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
n.d.
Dear Beatrice, I wonder if you could help me in a certain matter? I am so upset by the torn and tattered state of a lot of my old manuscript and wish you could tell me where I could buy a cheap duplicator, one of those into which you put a page of MSS and out comes a new clean copy. I would want only a small one, and cheap. I think I saw one often for sale in Auckland, but foolishly didn’t buy it. Some of them are so cheap. Beatrice I would be so grateful if you would send me the names of some firms making the said duplicators. Just cheap ones. So that I could duplicate the old MSS in my spare time. I grieve to see it so tattered and torn looking. Hoping you can help me in my sorrow and worry over MSS,
Yours ever, with love

MSS 557
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
17 November 1964
Dear Eve,
I wish I could help you about the duplicator; but I do know that any worth having would be pretty expensive - far more expensive, for instance, than having copies of the old manuscripts typed. Couldn’t you retype them yourself - perhaps revising as you go along to make a final copy nearer to your aim at perfection? The alternative would be to get photostats made by the Public Library here. This works out, I think, at only about 6d per page. The manuscripts of yours which we have, and which I pray we shall soon be able to publish at least part of, are the following:
Wild Australia
Bancroft House
Demeter of Dublin Street
The Old Mill
Remote, Apart
The Victorians
The Land of the Long White Cloud
Last, Loneliest, Loveliest
If these are duplicates of the tattered ones you want to have copied, perhaps there is no need to have the copying done? If you do decide to retype any MSS yourself, please try to make a duplicate and be sure to type in double spacing on white paper.
It is a lovely dream of living in Greece. I do hope it comes true; but I don’t think it likely that the Hellenes would have money to give you for sustenance.
Yours with love

MSS 259
June Langley to Beatrice Davis
2 December 1964
Dear Miss Davis,
I must inform you of my sister’s (Eve Langley) true Mental condition. She like Nijinsky is a Schizophreniac, (sic) incurable.
After all the years of distress I am now disabled with Disseminated Sclerosis, also incurable.
After 7 years of care of my sister, during which time she remained in the Avondale Mental Hospital, I was told by Doctor Buchanan Superintendent, that she would never be released.
Eventually my care was rewarded, my sister was released in my care, but still as a Mental case, but as long as she was free, that was all I wanted. Dr Boyd who is her Doctor, told me she should never have been released, and that I should have left her there. She is obviously Mental and everyone knows it.
Kind Regards
MEMORANDUM

Langley - The Pea Pickers
Just to remind you the CLF has given a grant towards this reprint.
No copies of the book here, but Jack Hyde has several stored away in the Trade Department.
Will you get copy and order the reprint?

MEMORANDUM (as previous)

Beatrice Davis to Mr MacArthur, (A&R)
24 March 1965
MEMORANDUM

Eve Langley - The Pea Pickers
Please order a reprint of 2000 copies to sell at 25/- (see your memo 30.9.64).
The C.L.F. has granted a subsidy of £225, payable on publication.
Jacket and jacket copy as is except for price. Copy of book herewith with changes in fronts (sic fonts?)
marked.

Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
30 April 1965
Dear Beatrice,
I posted the Portrait of the Artist to you last Friday. I do hope you got it. Beatrice, if you store it away,
that will be wonderful. Its all about the war 1940-41, and is good. My dove, it is only 90 days to
August 2nd when I sail for Piraeus, and grape picking in the Hellenes. You have said I wont (?) get a
pension in the Hellenes, but I will try. I should love to wander about staring in old statues and the rest
(?)...?? Write and let me know re The Portrait of the Artist. Love from

This MS should be on my desk. Sorry I can’t find report sheet or remember title, but it is Eve Langley’s
latest.

Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis
14 April 1965
Dear Beatrice,
Here is PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST, at last. It is a journal written in years of war. I wish you could
spare time to read it. But if you just store it away, I’ll be just as grateful.
With love from yours ever

General Reader’s Report on eight of Langley’s novels
By Nan McDonald
Author: Eve Langley

Cloud, Demeter of Dublin Street, The Old Mill, and Last, Loneliest, Loveliest.
Of these novels (I suppose we may as well go on calling them novels, though they become more and more frankly autobiographical) I think Bancroft House is the only one that could be published — unless Eve Langley should become fashionable literary cult (which is quite possible), in which case we could no doubt do the lot. Bancroft House has not much plot, but it has more unity than the others and the characters are more alive. All these novels are shapeless and lacking in story interest; all have characteristic flashes of brilliance and originality; and all are distinctly inferior to The Pea Pickers. This deterioration began in White Topees, with the author’s increasing tendency to turn in on her own mind and sensations and with a corresponding loss of vividness in outer incidents and other characters. Steve’s agonies and introspections could be accepted in The Pea Pickers because they were balanced by so much comedy and such lively observation of people and places, and also because it was a novel of youth, and they had their rightful place in it. But as Steve grows older in these later books such things become harder to take, and unfortunately her miseries seem to increase I proportion to the reader’s loss of sympathy.

Wild Australia begins well with the ride over the Alps, but trails off into flatness and too many reminiscences of The Pea Pickers. The Victorians is worse, a mere chewing over of the material of The Pea Pickers with all the life gone out of it. The four with a New Zealand setting have at least the interest of fresh background, but in all of them the chief theme is Steve and her thoughts and emotions. In The Old Mill Steve’s romance with Hilary does give some kind of story interest, and the fact that she is going to have a baby in Last Loneliest Loveliest means that at least the reader has a hope of something happening, but I do not think that any one of these can really stand on its feet as a book.

The thought occurred to me - it would be an outrageous one in relation to most writers of Eve Langley’s quality, but in her case I think it is excusable - that a good novel might be made by picking the best pieces out...

MSS 575
...of several of these and running them together. For example, The Old Mill and Last, Loneliest, Loveliest, both being about Steve’s relations with Hilary Clark, might be made into one story. But what Mr Clark, who is no doubt still very much alive, would say about it I don’t know. Anyway, it is unlikely that Eve Langley herself would consent to such a proceeding. Moreover, it would take a good deal of preliminary work before we could see whether it could be done at all, and such long-range and unprofitable schemes seem rather beyond our reach at present.

One point must be remembered if we publish any of these MSS: in all of them Eve Langley refers to characters from The Pea Pickers by their actual names, and not by the names they have in that book. These would need to be altered to save the reader from confusion, and also in some cases to protect us from libel actions. Literary allusions and quotations are as usual made with reckless abandon and would need to be thoroughly checked.

I have probably not done the later MSS justice. It was necessary for someone to read them all for purposes of comparison, but seven full-length works are too much Eve Langley for anyone to take in a few months without indigestion. The author’s letters indicate that there are still more to come, but I think it is better to report on these now, since I don’t think I could face the others for some time to come.

MSS 575
MANUSCRIPT SUBMITTED

Author: Eve Langley
Title: Portrait of the Artist
FRONT PAGE, Eve Langley’s note to Beatrice Davis
8 July 1965
Dear Beatrice,
Our Dr Reg Dudding of the North Shore in Auckland handed me these poems of his during the days of war. I hope you keep them and appreciate him. He was such a lovable witty doctor and we all loved him so.
It was said of him often, “He never sends in a bill.”
A remarkable mad.

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Yours ever, on the eve of trying to get to Pireaus.

Eve Langley
Just Eve!
Love to all!

**MSS 579**
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
30 April 1965

[Handwritten note on letter: 'Please enter and give to Nan to read']
Dear Eve,
Lovely to hear from you and to have "Portrait of the Artist". Of course I shall spare time to read it, and so shall Nan. I do pray that this is something we can publish without the difficulties that your other manuscripts have raised. We really do want to do another Eve Langley book.

With love

**MSS 581**
Set of poems by Dr Reg Dudding sent by Eve Langley to Beatrice Davis

**MSS 583**
Ditto

**MSS 585**
Beatrice Davis to Eve Langley
16 July 1965

Dear Eve,
Thankyou for sending us the copies of Dr Dudding’s poems. We shall cherish them as you ask.
Love, as ever

**MSS 587**
RS, Production to Beatrice Davis
20 August 1965

**MEMORANDUM**
Langley, The Pea Pickers
The above title is now on order from Halstead Press as a Post 8vo reprint for delivery early next year. The Sales Department felt that they will have to have a new jacket for this edition…?

[Handwritten note: 10.9.63 No. We like this one; and in any case sales would not be affected much. B (Beatrice)]

New Jacket designed by q.F.D

**MSS 589**
Photocopy of Dust Jacket of *The Pea Pickers*

**MSS 591**
Reviews of *The Pea Pickers* on rerelease

*The Pea-Pickers*
By
Eve Langley

Since it first appeared in 1942, The Pea-pickers has grown in stature through the acclaim it has won. Now reprinted, it is a book for all to read.

The Pea-pickers is an odyssey of youth - the story of two girls who, dressed as boys, set out to earn a living by odd jobs with the small farmers of Gippsland and the Australia Alps. Love of life and life’s anguish for the young are its key-notes; toil in the fields, hunger and poverty, love and mateship, are its themes. Steve and Blue, as they christen themselves, have few defences against life except their wit and
laughter, their courage and their fastidious souls. They pick peas and hops and maize, and they see life - the life of the Australia country-side.

The sheer poetry of the prose in The Pea-pickers is something of a miracle in our time; yet it is essentially a humorous book, a realistic book full of mockery and tenderness and clear-eyed observation. It shines with a passionate love of natural beauty, and it embodies an outlook so arrestingly individual that it can be compared only to itself.

Some Press opinions of The Pea Pickers:

Douglas Stewart, in the Bulletin: "At once a unique and a remarkable clarification of the Australian Image...This author is as passionately sardonic as she is, in high moods, ecstatic...What love of words and skill with words, what love of Australian earth and Australian people and skill in painting them, what rich humour and spiritual power have gone into it."

Frank Dalby Davidson, in the Bulletin:
"It has the dew on it. It contributes something fresh to Australian literature. It is rare. I think it will be cherished."

Telegraph, Brisbane:
"It is an astonishing book...an achievement in the picaresque narrative...a rich fecundity of descriptive imagination and poetic invention."

New York Times Book Review:
"The peculiar charm of this book is the Puckish laugh and the rich, earthy figures in which it exults."

Sydney Morning Herald:
"Youth is the keynote of this novel. Youth with all its charm and all its faults: warmth and abandon, egotism and garrulousness...Miss Langley has an excellent sense of humour."

Argus, Melbourne:
"The descriptive background is too vivid and the character sketching too firm and sure for any other source than real life."

MSS 593
Beatrice Davis to Mr R. Dickson, copy Mr Iliffe
22 September 1965

MEMORANDUM

Eve Langley

We have had a letter from the Ambassador to Greece, His Excellency Mr H.B. Gullett, about Eve Langley who, having arrived in Athens, is penniless.

Applying to the C.L.F. for aid may take some time, and I think in the meantime we ought to send a cheque for £50 (against the royalties on a forthcoming reprint of The Pea Pickers). It seems best, too, to make this out to Mr Gullett, who will give it to Eve Langley or use it to help her.

Cheque authority attached.

MSS 595
A.L. Moore, Secretary, Commonwealth Literary Fund to Douglas Stewart, O.B.E.
27 September 1965

Dear Douglas,

I have your letter of 20th September about Eve Langley. I shall certainly discuss it with the Chairman when he is in Canberra at the end of the week.

My first thought is that we might ask the Committee to approve a pension payable through our Embassy in Greece, but, of course, a grant to meet immediate needs might be more appropriate.

As we will have to approach the Committee whether a pension or a grant is needed, I think it would save time if you could write to Mr. Gullett, as you suggest, and ask him which form of assistance he thinks would best meet the case. This information would be helpful in reinforcing a recommendation to the Committee.

I shall let you know the Chairman's views as soon as we have discussed the matter.
With kind regards,
Yours sincerely

MSS 597
Douglas Stewart to His Excellency Mr H.B. Gullett, M.C., Australian Ambassador to the Kingdom of Greece
29 September 1965

Dear Jo,

Further to Eve Langley. I enclose a copy of a letter I have had from Mr A. L. Moore, secretary of the Commonwealth Literary Fund. I had written to him, quoting extracts from your letter and from my reply to you. I have also had an informal talk with the chairman of the C.L.F., Sir Grenfell Price, about it.

Could you let me know, in the way Moore suggests, what sort of help would be most useful, if the C.L.F. is able to provide it? A pension, perhaps for just a few months, until the position sorts itself out? Money for repatriation? A simple grant of a few pounds? Or whatever.

Eve has had a Thing about Greece all her life; it is -- or ancient Greece I -- her Promised Land; and for that reason, if she hasn't gone right off the deep end, we'd love to have her see something of the country before she comes home. In very odd clothes, and with odd enough behaviour, she nevertheless has managed in recent years to get herself back to Australia from New Zealand, to live alone in a shack in the Blue Mountains somewhere, and to go pea-picking again in Gippsland. Would it be possible to let her wander off into Greece for a while, with a small grant, on the understanding that she would keep in touch with the Embassy? Or is she too bad for that?

Her married name, incidentally, is Mrs Hillary Clark. She has a husband and some children (grown up) in New Zealand somewhere, I think; but whether she keeps up any contact with them I don't know.

Anyhow, if you will let me know what you think is best to be done, I'll put it up to the C.L.F. There is a meeting of the Board on 29th October, and we shall be seeing the parliamentary committee on 4th November. It might be possible to speed any action up, if need be.

Kind regards

P.S. The Meanjin project is off. Christesen couldn't fit the essay in at this date without cutting, though he was as impressed with it as I am, and we didn't think it ought to be cut. Ray Crooke, an artist whose work you may know, is designing the dust jacket for the book, an effect of wood-cut, I hope.

MSS 601
Douglas Stewart to H. B. Gullett
12 October 1965

Dear Jo,

Just to recapitulate and explain what you already know from the C.L.F.'s cable about Eve Langley.

I worked on the assumption that she would be coming by ship, second-class fare from £210-1250. And, disregarding A & R's £50, which could be pocket money, I tried to get another £250.

She has only £55 in the bank, but the manager (R.D. Denyer, A & NZ Bank, Katoomba) told me that she could draw on him for a total of £150. She does this through any convenient bank in Athens (suggested National Bank of Greece), and Denyer said it could be arranged within a few days.

The C.L.F. will provide another £100; so there's the £250. I hope that this is adequate. If you need more (say, for air fares) I suggest you cable A.L. Moore in the P.M.'s Department in Canberra, or even Senator Gorton direct.

Please let me know if there's anything more to be done. Should Eve be met on arrival? In any case, she'd be welcome to call in at A & R. and talk things over. If these arrangements are going to leave her too broke, I think something more might be done through the C.L.F. I had to work quickly; and it was convenient to ask the C.L.F. for no more than a hundred at that stage.

Kind regards

MSS 603
Douglas Stewart to Mr R. D. Denyer, Manager, A & N.Z. Bank, Katoomba NSW
12 October 1965

Dear Mr Denyer,

This is to confirm the telephone conversation I had with you the other day about Mrs Eve Langley. She is stranded in Athens, under the care of the Australian Ambassador; and I have advised the Ambassador that you would be willing to allow her to draw on you up to a total of £150 – which I think she is likely to do.

She will have some royalties coming in next year from the new edition of *The Pea Pickers*.

Yours sincerely,

Douglas Stewart

4 February 1966

Dear Eve,

How are you? Did you get back safely? I was hoping that you might be able to call in when you got to Sydney.

How are you off for money? I might be able to get some more help from the Commonwealth Literary Fund if you need it. Do let me know.

The new edition of *The Pea Pickers* will be published on 24 February. We are sending you a copy.

Beatrice sends her congratulations and best wishes. As do I.

Yours

Eve Langley

25 March 1966

Dear Douglas,

thank you again for sending along the three copies of *PEA PICKERS*. You must know how greatly I love it and turn to read it often at night in the bush. Again thanks to both you and Beatrice. I was disappointed to not get a letter from you, advising me if the Commonwealth Literary Fund would help me to recover my luggage from the Custom House, Piraeus. If you could just write and give me their address, I could write and ask them for further help in that direction, for they may be able to persuade the Director of Customs at Piraeus to send the luggage along. Could you do this for me, as I am very worried about it and in need of help. You helped me when I was ill in Greece so I thought I could count on you for help in this instance.

Hoping to hear from you,

yours ever

Eve Langley

6 April 1966

Dear Eve,

Thanks for the poem, which we've sent on to David Campbell who is editing the anthology this year.

I wrote to Mr Gullett, the Ambassador in Athens, about your luggage, but it would probably be a good idea if you yourself wrote a not about it, saying what's missing, and where, to the Commonwealth
Fund. The man to write to is Mr A. L. Moore, Secretary, Commonwealth Literary Fund, Prime Minister's Dept, Canberra, ACT. You could say that I suggested you should write to him.

Kind regards

**MSS 613**
Eve Langley to Angus & Robertson
3 November 1966

Dear Sir,
I received a cheque from you of 85 dollars, or so and having banked it, I write to thank you profoundly for the Royalties on The Pea Pickers.

Yours truly
Eve Langley
And many thanks also for the 100 dollars sent to me when I was ill with the fever in hospital, Piraeus, Greece.

**MSS 615**
Eve Langley to Angus & Robertson
20 July 1969

Dear Sirs,
Thank you for your letter received today stating that a copy of The Pea Pickers has been sent to the Banziya at Ramallah, Jerusalem.
I am very grateful to hear the book was sent. I'll write air mail to Mr Banziya telling him of your forwarding of it.

Yours truly

**MSS 617**
Eve Langley to Shirley Tebbutt
n.d.

Dear Miss Tebbert,
Mr Duthie, the Chief Librarian of the Auckland Public Library has witnessed my signature. I have done my best with the form to fill it in, but have nothing startling or provocative - only the same old stuff about my self, and it bores me, horribly. Hope it doesn't bore you. Doesn't matter though. Please send all letters care of the Auckland Public Library.

**MSS 619**
Beatrice Davis to Ian Dear, A&R
24 April 1968

MEMORANDUM
Eve Langley: The Pea Pickers
This is still I print at $2.50. Might be worth considering in Pacific because of possible educational sales. Will you look at a copy? I think you’ll enjoy it.

**MSS 621**
Eve Langley to Angus and Robertson
6 June 1968

Dear Sirs,
Thank you very much for forwarding this years Royalties to me. I was working up at Panlooks, the scene of most of the Pea Pickers, at the time, and was glad of the cheque indeed.
I dined with Kit, Mrs William Panlook, over at The House, and she was telling me that her daughter Leslie told her that The Pea Pickers was now in use in all Victorian Secondary schools and colleges as a Matriculation book. Used mainly for exams, etc. I just thought I'd send along word to you. Also got a
letter from Mr Banziger in Zurich, Switzerland, saying that The Pea Pickers had been forwarded to him from Ramallah, some time after the Judean troops took over the city.

Many thanks indeed

MSS 623
Note
2 July 1960

Eve Langley MSS in strongroom 89 Castlereagh Street. Refer N. McDonald

MSS 625
Note
5 August 1964

I hear from 89 that this cheque for Eve Langley has never been presented at the Bank. Betty Goddard says they are stopping the cheque, and wants to know if we will be drawing a fresh one.

Do you think we'd better write to Eve about it first?

MSS 627
Eve Langley to Angus & Robertson Ltd
n.d.

Dear Sirs,

Please find enclosed receipt. I am sorry to be late in sending it to you, but you sent the cheque care of the Public Trust, and they had it for some time before sending it on to me. They relinquished my affairs in 1954, and the District Public Trustee handed back my estate to me, in that year.

Many thanks for the cheque. I am glad, as you know...well, that the book has returned you something, after all the work spent on it.

Yours ever

[Handwritten note: 'Miss Davis to see']

MSS 629
ORDER FORM
31 July 1975

Manuscripts
Eve Langley
(R. Walsh)

MSS 631
Eve Langley to Nan McDonald
1 October [1953]

Dear Nan McDonald,

The Mistral! Ah yes; I have such a great love for the Mistral! I think you have, too; perhaps everyone has. I knew it was a landwind, but wilfully forgot. I wish it could be left in, but perhaps we should wait and see. It is, as you say, a dangerous wind; but whenever I heard the name, the word Mistral, I think of one place only, of Dieppe, on the coast of France. I have a feeling that years ago there, a great yellow sandy wind ran out full of dust, from around Rouen and the Seine Inferieure and whirling along the golden beach dashed out into the blue sea, and trod its tops of foam and fire for miles, very dangerous, very beautiful. That is the Mistral to me. Therefore, seeing my mistral rush past me from Rouen into the sea full of earth and sand and storm and sea sweat, I feel I have described it rightly. For, because it is full of yellow dry sand, one doesn't want it to rise out of the sea and be a sea wind, at all. I hope Mistral can remain. But we shall see. The Mistral is a late afternoon wind, I think.

I hope you will like Wild Australia. If you find it startling and different in places, I hope you will understand that I felt I had to do something with Steve. Shortly, it will be the year 2000 and time to think of immortality. We must have an immortal line to deal with; the race must cling to something. Shaw said, "God is the stave or staff around which the race revolves, holding on." It is quite true. So
following the general, modern and popular line of thought, I give Steve and immortality. I can go forward with the character, and backward with it; with ease. There is no end to Steve; I don’t want an end. Can fuse her him with Christ in the year 2000 and feel that I’ve contributed something to the race. If I could do that for Australia I should feel I hadn’t lived I vain. But, the book is yours, you know, to cut as you like. I was almost going to dedicate it to you; but remembering poor Chattertons sad tired voice piteous, I dint. I should like a copy of Australia Poetry.

Yours ever