

The works of 'David Lynn': New Zealand writer

Rowan Gibbs

In 1946, the New Zealand novelist and politician John A. Lee reprinted a novel by another New Zealander which Lee claimed had already sold 200,000 copies in England. On the cover Lee trumpeted: 'The sensationally successful New Zealand writer, who landed in London penniless and ended by writing, publishing and selling his own novels, and as a result made a vast amount of money. He made £2,000 out of this book [*Love and Hunger*], which is of rough, tough, raw-edged life....'¹

Yet the novelist Lee refers to is virtually unknown in New Zealand literary circles, in spite of his publishing some twenty eight books, most of them fiction (novels, novellas and short stories) between 1942 and 1967. Most are 'social' fiction, set in London high society or the Soho underworld, though earlier stories are set in Canterbury and in Sydney. His work is recorded sporadically in bibliographies, but receives no mention in general literary histories, even in the generously-inclusive chapter on popular fiction by Terry Sturm in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature*.

The *New Zealand National Bibliography* lists only those of his books that are set in New Zealand, Gries (322) lists five titles and Burns lists only one. None of Lynn's books is recorded in the annual publication *The Current National Bibliography of New Zealand Books and Pamphlets 1961...1965* (Wellington, National Library Service, 1963-1965; National Library of New Zealand, 1966) nor in its successor *New Zealand National Bibliography 1966, 1967, 1968* (Wellington, Alexander Turnbull Library for The National Library of New Zealand, 1968-1969).

A few are noted in Australian bibliographies: Miller, Hubble and the *Australian National Bibliography* all list *Barney Christopher*; Loder lists five titles, and Lynn has an entry in *List of Australian Writers* (which does not record individual titles). Ten titles are noted in Hubin's Crime Fiction bibliography, but the most comprehensive (though far from complete) list is in the British Library Catalogue, which records twenty-three of his

works, but omits several of the first editions. Some titles are also erratically recorded in the annual publications *British National Bibliography*, *The English Catalogue of Books* and *Whitaker's Cumulative Book List*.

Even Lynn's real name is uncertain. The *New Zealand National Bibliography* states that 'David Lynn' is a pseudonym and gives his real name as David McLennan.² This could just be correct, but the evidence on which this attribution was based cannot now be traced, and I feel strongly that his name was in fact David McClelland. This name occurs several times in his books: both *The Pepper Tree* (1943) and *Four Walls* (1946) state significantly on the title-page 'Edited by D. McClelland', and *Beer and Oysters* (1942) is dedicated 'To Norman McClelland' (*Death of an Undertaker* (1943) is dedicated 'To my mother in far away New Zealand' and another book is dedicated to an (untraced) Miriam Shabner). John A. Lee, announcing his reprint calls him 'Lynn, or McLelland [sic] to use his real name' (2) but I feel this evidence is outweighed by the recurring spelling McClelland.

It seems likely Lynn grew up in Canterbury, was in Sydney by 1936, and in London by 1942. During World War 2 (probably in early 1943) he founded his own publishing company in London, Kangaroo Books,³ with offices first at 55 Muswell Hill Road, London N.10, later (from about mid-1943) in Avenue Chambers, Southampton Row, W.C.1, home of many 1950s British paperback publishers (Holland 42, 58 & *passim*). Several of his own novels appeared under the Kangaroo Books imprint as did at least five by other authors.⁴ The last known title under the original Kangaroo Books imprint was published in 1946, though Lynn revived the name in 1965.⁵

In the 1960s his work also appeared with the imprint 'Kiwi Books', no doubt his own company, whose address is given by *B.N.B.* as 27 Colindale Avenue, London N.W.7 (also as N.W.9).

So far Lynn's books remain the main source of information on his life, but the books have not survived in large numbers. The Turnbull Library has eleven titles, I have two, but most remain elusive, even his later books. The last was *Erotica from the Classics* published in 1967 and two years earlier he had republished several of his earlier novels, including his bestseller *Love and Hunger*. His bibliography is complicated by the fact that several of his early books were soon reprinted in a different size, with different cover design, by a different printer (no doubt because of wartime paper shortages), some with a second story added, but with the title-page

wording remaining unchanged, and so they have escaped the notice of cataloguers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This list is alphabetical as the exact chronological sequence of some titles is still uncertain (see end for an attempted list by date). All items were published under the name 'David Lynn'. The information given (printer, size, cover details, price, publisher's address) is intended to differentiate variant printings where these are known. Titles that have been sighted are described as 'Seen WTu (WN, RG)'; all other titles are described from the secondary sources stated. Library holdings apart from WTu and WN are unconfirmed and taken from the Union Catalogue on Microfiche (Wellington: National Library of New Zealand, 1987) or from NUC.

Abbreviations used in references:

Bagnall: *New Zealand National Bibliography to the year 1960*.

BLC: *British Library Catalogue*.

BNB: *British National Bibliography* (references are to the cumulative five-yearly volumes; the 1950-1984 cumulation on microfiche omits publishers' addresses).

Bodleian: The Bodleian Library, Oxford (cited from on-line catalogue COPAC).

Burns: *New Zealand Novels and Novelists*.

CP: Canterbury Public Library, Christchurch.

DP: Dunedin Public Library, Dunedin.

ECB: *English Catalogue of Books*.

Gries: 'A Bibliography of New Zealand Prose Fiction'.

Hubin: *Crime Fiction II*.

LC: Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Loder: *Australian Crime Fiction*.

MM: Miller & Macartney, *Australian Literature*.

NLA: National Library of Australia, Canberra (cited from on-line catalogue).

NUC: The National Union Catalog, pre-1956 imprints... 754v. London, Mansell, 1968-1981.

RG: Rowan Gibbs, Wellington.

TC: Library of Trinity College, Dublin (cited from on-line catalogue COPAC).

Wh: *Whitaker's Cumulative Booklist* (cited from the five year cumulations).

Wms: Richard Williams, *Miscellanea I* (cited only for item 23).

WN: National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

WTu: Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

1. *ALL FOR THE BEST*. London: Kangaroo Books (Avenue Chambers) n.d. Printed by Samuel Sidders. 64pp. 182x123mm, yellow paper wrappers, 1s. Subtitle on cover: A Dramatic Comedy. Set London. Portrait of author on rear cover. Listed: BLC (dating [1945]), ECB (dating April 1945); Wh (dating Jan. 1945). Copy seen: RG (Republished c.1946 with *FOUR WALLS*: see 10).

2a. *BARNEY CHRISTOPHER*. London: Kangaroo Books (Avenue Chambers), n.d. Printed by Harrison & Sons. 168pp. 187x126mm, red cloth; white dust jacket, price 8s6d. On jacket: 'A sensational novel of the Australian underworld'. Set Sydney. Dated 'Sydney 1936' at end of text. Listed: Wh (dating Oct.1945) Loder and Hubin (both dating 1945); Gries (dating 1946 following WTu). Copy seen WTu. (dated 1946 in WTu catalogue, probably from accession date of 26 March 1946); copies also at National Library of Australia, Canberra, and University of Pennsylvania Library.

2b. London, Kangaroo Books 1965 (BLC; BNB: 168pp. 19cm, 8s6d).

3a. *BEER AND OYSTERS*. London, Staples Books 1942. Listed: BLC (64pp. 8vo); Hubin.

3b. London: Kangaroo Books (Avenue Chambers) n.d. On rear cover: 'Published by Shelley Castle Ltd...and Printed by Samuel Sidders...'. 63pp. 176x115mm, grey paper wrappers with orange bands, 1s3d. Dedication: 'To Norman McClelland in memory of many happy times in the past'. Seven short stories, all set Christchurch. Listed: Bagnall M495 (dating 1944; this date is substantiated by the listing in the book of five Kangaroo Press titles by other authors dated 1944 by BLC). Copy seen WTu; also held CP.

4. *THE BENEVOLENT DESPOT*. London, Kangaroo Books. Listed: BLC (1945, 64pp. 8vo); Wh (dating Feb.1945).

5a. *THE COBBLESTONE FAMILY*. London: Kangaroo Books 1943. Listed: BLC; ECB (cr 8vo. 224pp. 3s6d), Wh (both dating Nov.1943); Burns ('1943 ...Social activities around a farming area in Canterbury').

5b. New edition, Kangaroo Books 1944. Listed: ECB (6s, July 1944, 7" x 4", 223pp.); Wh (July 1944).

5c. London, Kangaroo Books (Avenue Chambers), n.d. 'Made and Printed by Samuel Sidders...and Published by Shelley Castle Ltd'. 223pp. 180x120mm, buff card wrappers printed in black and red. On cover: 'New Long Novel of Love and Humour on a New Zealand Farm'. Price 1s3d in list in 3b. Listed: Gries; Bagnall M496 (dating [c.1945]). Copies seen WTU (received 11 July 1946) and WN; also held CP and DP.

6. *A CROOK IN PARADISE*. London, Kiwi Books [1963] (BLC; Hubin: 'short stories').

7. *DEATH OF AN UNDERTAKER*. London: Kangaroo Books (Avenue Chambers) n.d. Printed by Clifford Printing Co. 103pp, 180x123mm, yellow paper wrappers, 2s. Set London; dedicated: 'To my Mother in far away New Zealand'. Listed: Wh (dating Jan.1943, giving price as 1s6d and address as 55 Muswell Hill Road, so possibly an earlier edition); BLC ('1943'), Hubin ("1943"), Gries (n.d.). Copy seen WTU.

8. *THE DISPOSSESSED*. London: Kangaroo Books (Avenue Chambers) n.d. Printed by William Brown, [48]pp., 200x120mm, white card wrappers, 1s3d. Subtitle: 'A dramatic romance'. Novel about striking workers, set Christchurch. Listed: Bagnall M497 (dating [c.1944]), BLC ([1944]); Wh ('32pp': a variant?; dating March 1944). Copy seen WTU.

9. *EROTICA FROM THE CLASSICS*. Compiled by David Lynn. London, Kiwi Books 1967. 189pp, 18cm, 9s6d. (Wh: Feb.1967; BNB; BLC; also held LC and Bodleian).

10. *FOUR WALLS* [followed by *ALL FOR THE BEST*, A Dramatic Comedy]. London: Kangaroo Books. Listed: BLC ('[London c.1946]. 46pp.'). Wh ('Edited by D. McClelland' 96pp. [sic]: variant?, dating Oct.1946 and giving both Pocket Books and Kangaroo Books as publisher).
11. *HEAVEN ON EARTH*. London: Kangaroo Books, n.d. Listed: ECB (8_” x 4_”, 32pp, January 1944, 1s.); Wh (Feb.1944). Story set Sydney. Dated 'Sydney 1936' at end of 21a. Also published with 20. *The Pepper Tree*, Feb. 1943 and with 21a *The Pillory* (possibly pub. Dec.1943).
12. *HERE AND THERE*. London: Kangaroo Books. Listed Wh ('24pp, June 1945, Short stories, 1s. '); Hubin ([c.1944], short stories). (Not in BLC but held at Bodleian.)
13. *JANET SEDLEY, A Romantic Novel*. Kangaroo Books. Listed BLC: 374pp 8vo. 1946; Wh (Oct.1946, 12s6d.)
14. *THE LAST OF THE CARROLLS*. London, Alliance Book Co. 8pp. [c.1950] (BLC; not listed in Wh).
- 15a. *LOVE AND HUNGER*. London: Kangaroo Books n.d. Listed Wh (64pp, July 1946); price 1s. (However, there was probably an earlier edition as this title is listed in 1 which was published Jan. or Feb. 1945). The title of the book probably derives from Lionel Britton's massive (700 page) *Hunger and Love*, London & New York: Putnam, 1931, earlier adduced as the touchstone of the socialist novel in Bernard Shaw's quotation on John A. Lee's *Children of the Poor*: 'The book is a whopper. Its only rival in intensity is Lionel Britton's *Hunger and Love*'.
- 15b. *Reprint?* ('150,000th thousand' on verso-title). London: Kangaroo Books (Avenue Chambers), n.d. Printed by G.C.P.C. Ltd. 63pp, 175x92mm, white card wrappers; this may be the edition listed at 1s3d in 3b, or that listed at 1s6d in 15c. Novel set London. Copy seen WTu. (21b below states 'Over a hundred thousand copies already sold' of *Love and Hunger*, describing it as 'A dramatic and sociological romance of the East End of London'; 21c states over 150,000 sold).

15c. *New Zealand reprint* by John A. Lee, n.d. Printed by Brookdale Press, Auckland. 52pp, 208x132mm, white paper wrappers. Announced in *John A. Lee's Weekly* April 24 1946 (p.2) and advertised from May 1 1946 (p.5) to June 12 1946 (p.13), at 1s. Listed: Gries (dating 1946), Bagnall M498 (dating [c.1945]). On front cover: '200,000 copies of this book by a New Zealander sold in Great Britain at 1/6 per copy'; on rear cover: 'This New Zealander has had amazing success with his pen in London and has sold millions of his books during the last few years. None of his titles has sold less than 200,000. John A. Lee Publications forecast much success in New Zealand'. Copy seen WTu; also held Auckland University Library and University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

The book was harshly reviewed in the Wellington newspaper *The Southern Cross* (a Labour paper, but at odds with the renegade Lee) by Anton Vogt, the only review traced of any of Lynn's novels and well worth reproducing:

Book Notes. New Zealander Writes Best Selling Junk

The war years saw a falling off in pulp magazines. In last week's 'By Invitation' column W.J. Scott discussed the problem of censorship. But if we are going to keep pulp out for moral or aesthetic reasons, we may as well get on to the job of keeping down local equivalents

I am referring specifically to 'Love and Hunger'. This "novel" (it is little more than a booklet) is a shoddy piece of work. The pseudo-autobiographical hero meanders into a slum and takes board with a family: finds a girl in the house rather less moral than she ought to be: tries sentimentally to "save her": and neither succeeds nor fails because the whole thing fizzles out in a farcical funeral. There is no story, no development of character, no insight into the tragedy of the situation or suggested remedy or cure. There is a facile and melodramatic use of language which debases any genuine emotion which might be felt.

It may seem strange that I bother to review such a book at all. There are two reasons. One is that David Lynn has sold 200,000 copies of this same 'book' in Great Britain, and an equivalent number of half a dozen other titles. He is, in short, a popular novelist. The other is that he is a New Zealander. Should I have added, unfortunately?

Lee bravely reprinted this review (omitting only the 'Junk' headline) and defended the novel in the June 12 1946 issue of his *Weekly*: '...I have found "Love and Hunger" of much interest...[it] comes to serious grips with life...I do not think Lynn junk...his booklets...are written against the evil system which produces slums...the best column in the *Southern Cross* is

the racing news...’ (It is presumably a coincidence that no advertisements for the novel appear in Lee’s *Weekly* after this date.)

15d. 63pp London, Kangaroo Books [1965] (BLC).

16. *THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN TOUCH*. 128pp. London, Kiwi Books [1965] (BLC).

17a. *THE MISADVENTURES OF MR. LARKIN*. London: Staples & Staples Listed: BLC ([1942] 94pp 8vo’); Wh (1s5d, 96pp, Aug.1942); Hubin (‘unseen’).

17b. As *MR. LARKIN*. London: Kangaroo Press (Avenue Chambers) n.d. (listed in 1 so probably not later than 1945). Printed by Wrightsons Ltd, 72pp, 181x112mm, white paper wrappers, 1s3d. Subtitle: *A Humorous Novel*. Set London. Copy seen WTu.

18. *MURDER IN THE BAZAAR*. London: Kangaroo Books, n.d. Listed: BLC (32pp, [1945]), ECB (6_” x 4_”, 1s., Mar 1945), Wh (March 1945), Hubin (1944, short stories).

19. *THE ONLOOKER*. 220pp, 22cm. London, Coram 1959, 13/6 (BNB; BLC; Wh dates 16.4.59)).

20a. *THE PEPPER TREE*. London: Kangaroo Books (Muswell Hill Road) n.d. Printed by Samuel Sidders and Son. 80pp, comprising *The Pepper Tree* pp.[3]-52; *Heaven on Earth* pp.53-80. 182x136mm, buff wrappers with three red bands, 1s3d. *The Pepper Tree* set Sydney. Dated ‘Sydney 1936’ at end. Dedicated ‘To Miriam Shabner. Edited by D. McClelland’. Listed: Wh (80pp, 1s3d, Feb.1943). Copies seen WTu and RG.

20b. *THE PEPPER TREE*. London: Kangaroo Books (Avenue Chambers), n.d. Printed by William Brown. 64pp. Contains *The Pepper Tree* only. 158x103mm, pale green wrappers with dark green bands, 1s3d. Copy seen WTu: (received 18 Sept.1944).

20c. *THE PEPPER TREE*. 64pp. London, Kangaroo Books [1965](BLC).

20d. *THE PEPPER TREE AND OTHER STORIES*. Kangaroo (Gries: no date, no holdings). Possibly identical to 20a.

21a. *THE PILLORY*. London: Kangaroo Books (Avenue Chambers), n.d. Listed: ECB, Wh (both: 64pp, 1s3d, Dec.1943). Story set London.

21b. *Reprint?* (states on rear cover 100,000 sold of *Love and Hunger*). London: Kangaroo Books, n.d. Printed by William Brown, 64pp, 158x114mm, cream paper wrappers with 3 red bands. Contains only *The Pillory* (set well leaded at 25 lines per page). Copy seen WTu.

21c. *Later reprint* (on rear cover '150,000 sold of *Love and Hunger*'). London: Kangaroo Books, n.d. Printed by Samuel Sidders, 64pp, comprising *The Pillory* pp.[3]-32 and *Heaven and Earth* pp.37-63. 209x136mm, blue paper wrappers with red bands, 1s3d. Subtitle: A Dramatic Romance. Copy seen WTu.

22a. *THE PROPHET RETURNS*. Possibly published by Staples in 1942 (listed in 3b, 1944, at 1s3d; listed in 21c as *The Prophet Returns* (Karl Marx)).

22b. London: Kangaroo Books, 1946. Listed by Wh (64pp, 9d, August 1946).

22c. London, Kangaroo Books [1965] 63pp (BLC).

23. *A ROOM IN CAMDEN TOWN*. London: Kangaroo Books 1944. Listed by ECB (7" x 3", 64pp, 1s3d, Feb.1944); Wms ('... 175x94mm, designed front cover with three red bands on white background'); Wh (Feb.1944); Hubin (1944).

24. *THE ROUND VOYAGE*. London: Kangaroo Books 1944. Listed by: Wh (64p 1s6d, fiction, dating Feb.1944). .

25. *THIS AND THAT*, Humorous Stories. London: Kangaroo Books, 1944. Listed: ECB (7" x 4", 31pp, 1s, Dec.1944), Wh (32pp, Nov.1944), Hubin (1944); BLC dates [1944]; also held TC.

26. *A TIME TO REMEMBER*. 199pp. London, Kiwi Books 1965 (BLC).
27. *THE WONDERFUL CITY*. London, Kiwi Books 1964 200pp, 19cm, 3s6d (Wh, dating 12.11.64; BNB; BLC; also held Bodleian and TC).
28. *ZOMBIE*. London: Kangaroo Books, 1945 . Listed by BLC (32pp, [1945]), ECB (cr.8vo, 1s., Jan.1945), Wh (35pp, Jan.1945).

PROBABLE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF LYNN'S BOOKS:

Order within years largely uncertain; not all reprints (indicated by *) are included; publishers abbreviated as A—Alliance; C—Coram; Ka—Kangaroo; Ki—Kiwi; L—John A. Lee; S—Staples.

- 1942 *Beer and Oysters* (S); *The Misadventures of Mr Larkin* (S); *The Prophet Returns* (S);
- 1943 *Death of an Undertaker* (Ka); *The Pepper Tree* (Ka); *The Cobblestone Family* (Ka); *The Pillory* (Ka);
- 1944 **Heaven on Earth* (Ka); *A Room in Camden Town* (Ka); *The Dispossessed* (Ka); **The Cobblestone Family* (Ka); *This and That* (Ka); *The Round Voyage* (Ka); **Beer and Oysters* (Ka);
- 1945 *Zombie* (Ka); *All for the Best* (Ka); *Benevolent Despot* (Ka); *Murder in the Bazaar* (Ka); *Here and There* (Ka); *Barney Christopher* (Ka); **Mr Larkin* (Ka); **The Cobblestone Family* (Ka);
- 1946 **Love and Hunger* (Ka, L); **The Prophet Returns* (Ka); *Four Walls* (Ka); *Janet Sedley* (Ka);
- 1950 *The Last of the Carrolls* (A);
- 1959 *The Onlooker* (C);
- 1963 *A Crook in Paradise* (Ki);
- 1964 *The Wonderful City* (Ki);
- 1965 **Barney Christopher* (Ka); **Love and Hunger* (Ka); *The Man with the Golden Touch* (Ki); **The Pepper Tree* (Ka); **The Prophet Returns* (Ka); *A Time to Remember* (Ki);
- 1967 *Erotica from the Classics* (Ki).

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ENDNOTES

¹ Lee announced his edition in *John A. Lee's Weekly*, April 24 1946, 2, promising 'We shall publish many of his titles in due course' – a promise not, apparently, fulfilled. Lee continues: 'Lynn ... is not a freak. He writes of the raw world he lives in because that world is so cramping and denying. Writing to me the other day, he said that in Britain wealth could still obtain almost anything, but the working man and woman knew real hardship ...' Lee's only other comments in his *Weekly* on *Love and Hunger* seem to be in the issue of June 12 1946, where he mounts a strong defence of the book and the author against harsh criticism from a local reviewer (see note on item 15c in bibliography).

² Bagnall may have believed that the author was the D. McLennan associated with the *Timaru Post* newspaper (see Scholefield 236). Gries also gives 'McLennan' as his real name, presumably following the entry in the Alexander Turnbull Library card catalogue. 'McLennan' is also given in Nesbitt and Hadfield, but the entry is almost certainly derived from Bagnall.

³ A kangaroo ('Gertrude', originally with a book in her pouch) had been the logo of the American paperback publishers Pocket Books since 1939 but their English division, Pocket Books (G.B.) Ltd, was not opened until August 1949 (Schreuders 18-30). This standard history of the paperback, first published as *Paperbacks U.S.A.*, Amsterdam: Loeb Publishers, 1981, makes no mention of Lynn's Kangaroo Books.

⁴ Holland says also an 'occasional comic' (42). Williams attempts to list all Kangaroo Books paperbacks in his *Miscellanea*, but he notes only Lynn's own titles and in fact misses several of these. Williams appears to have sighted only one title by Lynn (item 23 below), his information on the others being derived from *Whitaker's Cumulative Book List*. The Kangaroo Books by other authors that are known are (1) *Death in the Library* by John Greenfield, and (2) *Black Market Murders*, (3) *Death in Gelly Wood*, (4) *The Finger of Death*, and (5) *Killer by Night*, all by Henry Keyworth. These are listed in Lynn's *Beer and Oysters*, and all except (4) are held by BLC, which dates them 1944. *Whitaker's* (followed by Hubin) also lists (1), (2), (3) and (5), dating them respectively 1944, 1943, 1943, 1944, and adds (6) *Death in the*

Signal Box, by Keyworth, 1946. One other title that is almost certainly from the same publisher has been seen, a reprint of Jack London's novel *The Scarlet Plague*. This has no publisher's address but the printer is Samuel Sidders (see items 1, 3b, 5c, 20a, 21c below); it is undated but *Whitaker's* dates it May 1946. The title-page gives the publisher as 'Kangaroo Books' and interestingly includes a logo (not found on other Kangaroo Books seen) of a kangaroo, seated, wearing glasses and holding a book, very similar to Pocket Books' Gertrude (Schreuders reproduces nine variants of the Pocket Books kangaroo logo); the front cover even states 'Kangaroo Pocket Books' (cp. item 10 below). (Copy seen RG; held by BL, which dates it [c.1950] and by the Bodleian.)

⁵ *Whitaker's* gives Kangaroo Books's address as Avenue Chambers until the 1944-47 cumulation (published in 1948); the 1948-52 cumulation (published in 1953) notes on p.xi: 'gone from last known address'.

Originally published in *Kōtare* 1, no. 1 (1998), pp. 45-58.