



ISSN 1031-461X



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To cite this article: Mark Emmerson (2024) Mis/Understanding Jens Lyng: Revisiting the Racialised Studies of an Early Twentieth-Century Historian, Australian Historical Studies, 55:3, 464-484, DOI: [10.1080/1031461X.2023.2287507](https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2023.2287507)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2023.2287507>



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Published online: 18 Dec 2023.



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Mis/Understanding Jens Lyng: Revisiting the Racialised Studies of an Early Twentieth-Century Historian

MARK EMMERSON 

*The works of Danish-Australian historian Jens Sørensen Lyng (1868–1941) provide a problematic foundation for Australian migration studies. His 1927 magnum opus, *Non-Britishers in Australia: Influence on Population and Progress*, championed racist methodologies based on Nordic supremacy while simultaneously espousing progressive aspects of multiracial inclusion and pluralist nation-building. While revisionist histories have since condemned him as a racist pseudoscientist, Lyng’s more progressive arguments concerning Australian development and the acknowledgment that all peoples – to some extent regardless of race – had a role to play in a modernising Australia have been mostly overlooked. This article re-examines *Non-Britishers in Australia* and Jens Lyng himself to bring this apparent contradiction to the fore. It argues that Lyng’s work illustrates the interpolations of progressivism and racism in the era of White Australia, and that the two must be understood not as opposing sets of ideas but as ones that could be and were simultaneously promoted.*

Introduction

In the historiography of early twentieth-century Australian migration, Danish-born journalist, demographer and historian Jens Sørensen Lyng (1868–1941) is an influential, yet problematic, foundation figure. A pioneer within the Australian social sciences, Lyng was one of the earliest writers to discuss the importance of immigrant minorities to Australian society through his 1927 work, *Non-Britishers in Australia: Influence on Population and Progress*.¹ A precursor to the demographic studies of W.D. Borrie and Charles Price from the 1940s onwards Lyng challenged the myth of Australia as a 98 per cent British, racially

I am indebted to the reviewers and editorial team, particularly Fiona Paisley and Tim Rowse, for their encouraging feedback and collegial mentorship.

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

¹ Jens Lyng, *Non-Britishers in Australia: Influence on Population and Progress* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1927); Australian National University, ‘Selected Bibliography: Select Reading List of Publications on Immigration and Assimilation in Australia’, *International Migration Digest* 1, no. 2 (Autumn, 1964): 250–51.

homogeneous society and, by acknowledging the contributions of the ‘other’ to the creation of an Australian people, opened the door for a new field of research that would not formally exist until after World War II – that is, Australian ethnic history.² As I show, in his research publications Lyng pushed back against restrictive British-focused immigration policies and argued for an inclusionary definition of ‘whiteness’ that would incorporate Northern Europeans alongside British settlers, in particular Scandinavians like himself but also other racialised, ‘non-white’ minorities with whom he sympathised. While his assertion of Nordic racial superiority would become linked to Nazi ideologies following the war, Lyng’s broader ideas about the future of Australian society included recognition of the presence and potential contribution of non-white peoples to the nation, about whom he offered a relatively ‘progressive’, if also racist, and ultimately racist, perspective.

Scholars have differed in their interpretation of Lyng’s racist methodologies and his relatively inclusive approach to minorities. While the man himself was enthusiastically celebrated during his lifetime – Lyng was the Harbison-Higinbotham Scholar at the University of Melbourne and received much praise upon his 1927 book’s release – Lyng’s work has been much criticised by later researchers for lacking credible sources and for its many unsubstantiated claims, not least in his categorisation of migrant groups through now disproven theories of physical anthropology that qualify his writings as intensely racialised.³ As a result, Lyng is more often remembered as an author who used skull analysis to explain behavioural aspects in populations and for grossly embellishing and reinforcing racial hierarchies of his own Nordic superiority.⁴ Thus, while Hsu-Ming Teo argues that *Non-Britishers* was the first work to study the potential heterogeneity of the Australian people based on their inclusion within one dominant – British – system and culture, she notes also its social Darwinian framework that formed the foundation of a ‘racialist (and racist) history, not ethnic history’.⁵ For Teo, Lyng’s language of race overwhelmed any potential for the recognition of distinct ‘ethnic’ cultures or for pride in ethnic heritage, making him part of the problem, not the solution.

² W.D. Borrie, *Immigration: Australia’s Problems and Prospects* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1949); Charles Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1964); Hsu-Ming Teo, ‘Multiculturalism and the Problem of Multicultural Histories: An Overview of Ethnic Historiography’, in *Cultural History in Australia*, ed. Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2003), 145.

³ Ernest Scott, ‘Foreword’, in Lyng, *Non-Britishers in Australia*, vii; Andonis Piperoglou, ‘Favoured “Nordics” and “Mediterranean Scum”: Transpacific Hierarchies of Desirability and Immigration restriction’, *History Australia* 17, no. 3 (August 2020): 521–22; Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2005), 160–61; Olavi Koivukangas, ‘Scandinavian Immigration and Settlement in Australia before World War II’ (PhD thesis, Turku Institute for Migration, 1974), 6–7. Koivukangas criticised the self-educated historian’s lack of bibliography or source lists, as well as Lyng’s racial conviction of Nordic superiority; Teo, ‘Multiculturalism’, 145.

⁴ Lyng, *Non-Britishers*, 10; Koivukangas, ‘Scandinavian Immigration’, 6–7.

⁵ Teo, ‘Multiculturalism’, 142–57.

In his study of the mobilisations of whiteness in his era, Warwick Anderson agrees that Lyng's work was historically situated in the hard hereditary and racial categorisation of the day. But he concludes that 'Lyng was responding to debates over the proper composition of white Australia, the degree to which it might shade into a variegated whiteness'.⁶ For Anderson, in debates about population and nation in this period, 'whiteness' was not limited to one stable 'British' meaning, but was multifaceted and shape-shifting in ways that enabled a number of seemingly contradictory views on matters of exclusion and inclusion to be articulated by one person. According to Anderson, by arguing for the contributions of Nordics and other European minorities to the future of the white Australian nation, Lyng represents nothing less than 'a strange racist harbinger of multiculturalism'.⁷

With this strangeness in mind, this article approaches *Non-Britishers in Australia*, and Jens Lyng himself, as an illustration of the contradictions inherent within early ideas about what would later be called multiculturalism. Reading with and through the scientific racialism he espoused, the article examines how Lyng addressed the colonial and racial make-up of Australia in order to argue for the potential contributions of *all* minorities within the Australian population as a way to further social and economic development and create a society in which cultural diversity was appreciated.

Understanding Jens Lyng: Contextualising *Non-Britishers in Australia*

Non-Britishers in Australia is one of the first demographic surveys of Australia's minority groups in the early twentieth century. Its aim was to historicise the contributions of such groups to Australian development and to promote further non-British immigration, especially from northern Europe. Lyng set out to systematically chronicle each group's historical foundations in terms of migration patterns and notable members, in the process reiterating notions of racial characteristics ascribed to each, as well as their potential contributions to national development. Writing at a time of non-European migration restriction under the White Australia policy, over three quarters of *Non-Britishers* concerns continental European migration – Germans, Scandinavians, Italians and various other groups outside of Europe considered less favourable – asserting in positive tone their contributions, past and future, to Australian nation-building. Rather than relying on Britons to fill labour shortages, as dominated the current approach, Lyng advocates the blending of Nordic, Alpine and Mediterranean stock into a predominantly British Australia.⁸ As noted above, Lyng was part of the European

⁶ Anderson, 160–61.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Michele Langfield, 'White Aliens': The Control of European Immigration to Australia 1920–30', *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 12, no. 2 (1991): 1–14; Catherine Dewhurst, 'The "Southern Question" in Australia: The 1925 Royal Commission's Racialisation of Southern Italians', *Queensland History Journal* 22, no. 4 (2014): 317.

minority diaspora of which he wrote. The following discussion investigates aspects of Lyng's life as a member of the Scandinavian diaspora, seeking to understand how it was that a white, non-British scholar could be influenced by the scientific racism that underpinned White Australia, yet become an advocate for the expansion of migration, a vision of Australia marked by progressive ideas of inter-racial harmony.

At the time of writing *Non-Britishers*, Jens Lyng had been living in Australia for 34 years. Born in Hasle, Denmark, in 1868, Lyng's formative years corresponded with an increasingly scholarly interest in the intersections of race, empire, nation, and migration informed by the history of racial science. In 1855, French aristocrat Arthur de Gobineau had published his influential thesis *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* and began developing ideas of a superior 'Aryan' master race of Northern Germanic peoples.⁹ Simultaneously, scientific theories regarding the biological origin of humankind, largely sparked by Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859), were adapted by scholars during the 1870s to give Gobineau's race-based theories of human development an apparently scientific sanction. 'Social Darwinism' would provide a justification for the new imperial scramble for territories, particularly in Africa, that were occupied by humans considered 'uncivilised' and (now scientifically proven) 'unequal'.¹⁰ In addition, racial typologies that lauded Northern Europeans as superior based on genetics, intellect, and perceived civilisational developments saw an ideology of Nordicism that was promoted by white supremacists and ethnonationalists such as Houston Stewart Chamberlain and, later, Lothrop Stoddard.¹¹ According to Elazar Barkan, by the turn of the twentieth century 'racial theories which constructed a hierarchy of races with the Nordic at the top were considered factual, free of prejudice, and generally pertinent to social and political analysis'.¹² Race had become a respectable scientific category and, as racial differences were regarded as a matter of fact, not of prejudice, the modern idea of racism in a derogatory sense simply did not exist until the science of race began to be discredited and dismantled in the 1930s.¹³

Lyng and the Scandinavian diaspora

After leaving the Royal Danish military, 23-year-old Lyng emigrated to Melbourne in 1891. Lyng was a member of the Scandinavian diaspora, a protracted

⁹ Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race: New Racisms and the Problem of Grouping in the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 45–48.

¹⁰ Jane Samson, *Race and Empire* (Harlow: Pearson, 2005), 68–69.

¹¹ John P. Jackson, Jr, Nadine M. Weidman, and Gretchen Rubin, 'The Origins of Scientific Racism', *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 50, no. 5 (2006): 66.

¹² Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism; Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States Between the World Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*

process of emigration of over two million Swedes, Danes, and Norwegians to white settler states – predominantly the United States of America, Canada, and in lesser numbers to Australia – between 1825 and 1930.¹⁴ In Australia, Lyng and his fellow Danes were not considered undesirable or openly discriminated against, as were the Chinese or even Southern Europeans.¹⁵ Rather, they were a privileged group of migrants, acceptable for their Northern European status in an age of racial hierarchies and white settler colonialism. During the 1860s and 1870s, Australia courted this additional source of white labour needed to develop its colonial pastoral economies and bolster its settler numbers, by offering assisted passage schemes to non-British settlers – in particular Germans and Scandinavians. Some 114,000 European migrants were recruited to Queensland between 1860 and 1878.¹⁶ At their peak in 1891, the year of Lyng’s arrival in Melbourne, the colonial censuses recorded approximately 16,524 Scandinavians, 45,022 Germans, and 3,890 Italians.¹⁷ As these figures indicate, on the verge of Federation late nineteenth-century Australia was not wholly British-Australian but, as Brian Bullivant argues, had been a pluralist society in varying cultural, racial, social, and ethnic spheres since its first settlement.¹⁸ As Beverley Kingston astutely points out, because European immigrants were valued for their reputation as hard workers, for the sake of the further development opportunities and the opening up of the Australian interior their relatively slight cultural differences from the British-Australian majority could be ignored.¹⁹

Upon his arrival in 1891, Lyng established himself as a member of Melbourne’s Scandinavian immigrant community, within a few years becoming its de facto leader. After initial employment as a labourer, land-clearer, and shearer, Lyng’s multilingual abilities – he was fluent in German and English as well as his native Danish – were noticed by Baron Ferdinand von Müller, the famous government botanist, who offered Lyng employment as his private secretary.²⁰ Müller was part of an earlier generation of European

¹⁴ Byron J. Nordstrom, *Scandinavia Since 1500* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 199; Mark Emmerson, ‘“Vi er alle Australiere”: The Migrant Newspaper *Norden* and its Promotion of Pan-Scandinavian Unity within Australia, 1896–1940’ (PhD thesis, University of Southern Queensland, 2014), 29–37.

¹⁵ Hsu-Ming Teo, ‘The Romance of White Nations: Imperialism, Popular Culture, and National Histories’ in *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and Through the Nation*, ed. Antoinette Burton (London: Duke University Press, 2003), 281.

¹⁶ Fredrik Larsen Lund, ‘You May Well Become Slaves: On the Fringes of Queensland’s Assisted Migration Scheme’, *Queensland History Journal* 21, no. 11 (November 2012): 719.

¹⁷ Among other groups, 37,702 Chinese were also recorded. Compiled from data in James Jupp and Barry York, eds., *Birthplaces of the Australian People: Colonial & Commonwealth Censuses, 1828–1991* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1995), 3–5, 9, 10, 14, 18, 25, 33, 41, 44, 51, 57, 63, 73.

¹⁸ Brian M. Bullivant, *Pluralism: Cultural Maintenance and Evolution* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1984), 23, 45.

¹⁹ Beverley Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia, Volume 3: Glad, Confident Morning 1860–1900* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), 131.

²⁰ John Stanley Martin, ‘Lyng, Jens Sorensen (1868–1941)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2005, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lyng-jens-sorensen-13059/text23615>, (accessed 20 July 2023).

migrants who had promoted the scientific development of Australia via botany and geography.²¹ Employment as von Müller's secretary would be influential in shaping Lyng's own future direction as an intellectual, journalist, statistician, and historian.²²

According to Geoffrey Sherington, during the 1870s and 1880s non-British European migrants were sufficiently numerous and desirable to express their homelands' cultural differences within what was, in effect, a pluralistic settler state.²³ This was certainly the case for Lyng. In June 1896, he established the Scandinavian-Australian newspaper *Norden* (1896–1940), published mainly in Danish, to facilitate Scandinavian migrant interactions, inform new and old migrants of developments in their home countries, and celebrate Scandinavian culture and achievements in the southern hemisphere.²⁴ During Lyng's ten years as editor of *Norden*, he sought to inform his readers about a previous generation of migrants who had done well for themselves in their adopted homeland.²⁵ In the context of rising colonial nationalist sentiments and the impending Federation of the Australian nation, Lyng's articles attempted to provide his non-British migrant readership with historical roots in Australia while also encouraging ideals of ethnic continuity in the face of assimilation pressures. In this sense, Lyng used *Norden* to promote the role that his own people had played and would continue to play in the development of Australia, and this focus would later drive the creation of *Non-Britishers in Australia*.

In 1901, Lyng self-published two books that stemmed from *Norden's* serialisation of Scandinavian migrant biographies and settlement experiences: *Scandinavians in Australia in the Nineteenth Century* and *Emigrant Stories and Sketches*, both in Danish.²⁶ Although, like other amateur historical works, these collections drew from hearsay and discussions with older immigrants, they acted nonetheless as a significant record of the deep-rooted and far-reaching foundations of his immigrant community within Australian colonial history. Furthermore, Lyng used the pages of *Norden* to strengthen ties between the Nordic homelands and Australia, hoping in this way to swell the aging community with a fresh generation of immigrants from Scandinavia.

²¹ Deirdre Morris, 'Mueller, Sir Ferdinand Jakob Heinrich von (1825–1896)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2005, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mueller-sir-ferdinand-jakob-heinrich-von-4266/text6893>, (accessed 20 July 2023).

²² Jens Lyng and O.N. Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians in Australasia* (Melbourne: West Melbourne Printing Works, 1907), 68–70. Lyng provides a moving tribute to the deceased von Müller while recording his biography as part of this work.

²³ Geoffrey Sherington, *Australia's Immigrants* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1980), 85.

²⁴ Emmerson, "'Vi er alle Australiere'", 99–139; Mark Emmerson, 'A Readership of Convenience: Macro-National Cooperation within the Scandinavian-Australian Newspaper *Norden*, 1896–1940', *Journal of Australian Studies* 47, no. 3 (2023): 1–16.

²⁵ Emmerson, "'Vi er alle Australiere'", 126–31.

²⁶ Olavi Koivukangas and John Stanley Martin, *The Scandinavians in Australia* (Melbourne: AE Press, 1986), 229–30.

Nationalism, Federation, and the white Australia policy

Despite the relatively pluralist and tolerant nature of nineteenth-century Australia towards continental immigrants, over the 1880s and 1890s a burgeoning Australian national consciousness emerged with specific allegiance to Britain. Between 1861 and 1881, Australia increasingly took the place of the British Isles as the birthplace of the majority of the Australian population, and with the growing dominance of the native-born came a corresponding rise in nationalism and racial exclusionism.²⁷ As Ann Curthoys argues, from the mid-nineteenth century in Australia and other imperial dominions an uneasy settler consciousness about colonisation combined with loyalty to a British motherland intent on creating ‘all-white colonies which would exclude the importation of non-European labour and encourage British immigration’.²⁸ Furthermore, regardless of their asserted racial similarity, non-British European migrants were considered of declining value to the emerging nation. Curthoys writes: ‘despite this sense of European brotherhood, Britishness (and British subjecthood) was to remain primary ... it was the colonial expansionist mission of Britain, rather than that of Europe, which was to be consolidated and vindicated’.²⁹

Mostly this anxiety about ‘race’ targeted non-European migrant populations, such as the Chinese. By the 1880s, Australian intellectuals such as William Lane stressed the degenerative risks of unimpeded non-British invasion upon Australia, by which he meant from Asia, while Charles Pearson’s influential work *National Life and Character: A Forecast* ‘made the case to set Australia aside for the renewal and advancement of the “higher civilisation”’.³⁰ As Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds make clear, he made this case based on ‘proprietary assertions that certain lands were, and must remain, “white men’s countries”’.³¹

A racial focus on (British) whiteness was insufficient for grand nation-building schemes, however, as diverse settler societies also required internal unification through the formation of societal and emotional bonds supposedly built upon shared histories, culture, and language. The soul of the nation, in the

²⁷ W.D. Borrie, *The European Peopling of Australasia: A Demographic History* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1994), 143; John Eddy, ‘Nationalism and Nation-Making from Federation to Gallipoli’ in *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism*, ed. John Eddy and Deryck Schreuder (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 144.

²⁸ Ann Curthoys, ‘Liberalism and Exclusionism: A Prehistory of the White Australia Policy’, in *Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture, and Nation*, ed. Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker, and Jan Gothard (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2003), 10.

²⁹ Anne Curthoys, ‘White, British, and European: Historicising Identity in Settler Societies’, in *Creating White Australia*, ed. Jane Carey and Claire McLisky (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009), 17–18.

³⁰ David Walker, ‘Race Building and the Disciplining of White Australia’, in *Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture, and Nation*, ed. Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker, and Jan Gothard (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2003), 35–42.

³¹ Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2008), 93.

words of contemporary philosopher Ernest Renan, required a rich legacy of memories and the desire to live together, investing ‘the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form’.³² For the young Australian nation imagined in Lane and Pearson’s texts, this indivisible joint heritage was British first, and white second.

With Australian Federation and the implementation of the White Australia policy through the Immigration (Restriction) Act of 1901, non-European immigration virtually ceased overnight.³³ While this was not of concern to the Scandinavian community – some of whom vocally supported White Australia through *Norden* and felt racially connected by blood to their British-Australian cousins³⁴ – the catchcry of ‘Australia for the Australians’, made famous by *The Bulletin*, still affixed negative connotations to many migrant groups post-Federation, even white Europeans.³⁵ Ironically, as Stuart Macintyre notes, as an increasingly protectionist White Australia moved towards ‘the low-fertility–low-mortality pattern characteristic of economically advanced societies’, large-scale immigration was both championed and derided in the years directly after Federation.³⁶ While leaders such as Alfred Deakin and W. A. Holman called for the ‘alien element’ of Australian society to be controlled and limited as much as possible, cultivating an Australian-born culture and identity built on British respectability was difficult to achieve given declining birth rates.³⁷

Between 1906 and 1912, most states once again became enthusiastic towards assisted migration schemes targeting Europe, and numbers peaked in 1912 with 92,000 immigrants, over 90 per cent of whom were British and approximately half of whom were assisted.³⁸ As Graham Huggan notes, ‘it is important to remember that the White Australia Policy didn’t designate specifically who was considered to be white but discriminated rather on the basis of desirable and undesirable migrant groups’.³⁹ According to W.D. Borrie, assimilation was also considered relatively unproblematic as ‘the non-British minority was small enough to be practically ignored’.⁴⁰ Despite desiring for themselves some degree of cultural identity in the face of assimilation pressures, many Scandinavian-Australians such as Lyng wanted to share in this newfound membership in ‘white privilege’, and did so by emphasising their supposed Nordic

³² Ernest Renan, ‘What Is a Nation?’ in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 19.

³³ Jupp and York, 31.

³⁴ *Norden*, 14 March 1908, 8.

³⁵ Stephen Alomes, *A Nation at Last?: The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism, 1880–1988* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1988), 32, 40.

³⁶ Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia, Volume 4: The Succeeding Age, 1901–1942* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), 34.

³⁷ Raymond Evans, Clive Moore, Kay Saunders, and Bryan Jamison, *1901: Our Future’s Past* (Sydney: Macmillan, 1997), 50.

³⁸ Michael Roe, *Australia, Britain and Migration, 1915–1940: A Study of Desperate Hopes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 7.

³⁹ Graham Huggan, *Australian Literature: Postcolonialism, Racism, Transnationalism* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2007), 73–74.

⁴⁰ Borrie, *Immigration*, 82.

racial superiority even over fellow British-Australians, as Lyng would claim in *Non-Britishers*.⁴¹

While Lyng's position as a valued, white male migrant would be arguably assured by his naturalisation in 1901, his status as a non-British migrant during Federation and White Australia was to remain a major marker in his identity. As will be discussed later, this also influenced Lyng's more inclusionary, yet racist, position towards even non-white immigrants and their valued component of the new Australian nation. In 1906, Lyng resigned from *Norden* and relocated to Kinglake in Victoria with some Danish families. In this way he seemingly replicated in his own life *Norden's* casting of early Scandinavian immigrants as hardy, pioneering nation-builders. Lyng mingled living on the land with writing newspaper pieces which he sent in by mail, and the production of another book, *The Scandinavians of Australasia*, in 1907.⁴² By 1909, however, he had abandoned the Kinglake dream and returned to Melbourne, taking up a position within the Department of Defence as a draughtsman and later in the Ministry of Fisheries as a cartographer. While Lyng occupied these posts, his scholarly interests benefitted from access to government records and statistics, which he then used to add weight to his further studies. Significantly, for example, he worked on the 1911 census.⁴³ Meanwhile, Lyng diversified his writing for *Norden*, penning fictional stories such as the semi-autobiographical Australian novel *Teddy Wilkin's Trials* (1910), which was also serialised in *Norden* and was based on his own experiences on his rural property – albeit with a British settler protagonist.⁴⁴ When World War I began, Lyng's government role, military background and knowledge of German became important for the Australian Expeditionary Force, and he was sent with them to occupy German New Guinea.⁴⁵ Lyng's links to the military also enabled his newspaper, *Norden*, to evade the government censors and survive the wartime period.⁴⁶

The interwar period and the New Settlers' League

After the War, Lyng transferred to the Commonwealth Bureau of Statistics as senior draughtsman, and during this period became focused on the future direction of migration and population politics in Australia. By the 1920s, the Commonwealth and state governments, interested in further developing Australia following the regional security threats raised by World War I, sought to strategically augment the country's human resources through assisted immigration schemes, establishing programs specifically designed to put families on the

⁴¹ Lyng, *Non-Britishers*, 10.

⁴² Lyng and Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians in Australasia*; Koivukangas and Martin, *Scandinavians in Australia*, 158.

⁴³ Martin, 'Lyng, Jens Sorensen (1868–1941)'.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Koivukangas and Martin, *Scandinavians in Australia*, 157–58.

⁴⁶ Emmerson, "Vi er alle Australiere", 198–99.

land, and accelerating the construction of infrastructure to link these new rural communities.⁴⁷

Building on the *Enemy Aliens Act* implemented in 1920, wartime deportation orders and direct bans on migration from former enemy nations continued into the postwar era. As a result, migration schemes shifted away from continental Europe and back towards Britain, much to the delight of nationalist Prime Minister and Anglophile William Hughes.⁴⁸ Despite the Scandinavian nations remaining neutral or on the allied side, Fischer notes that most Australian citizens were unable to tell the different Northern European groups apart, leading to some postwar discrimination against them.⁴⁹ While the Empire Settlement Act of 1922 had aimed to encourage child and youth migration programs, poor state oversight and funding undermined their efficacy and many failed terribly.⁵⁰ Well into the twentieth century, most migration settlement schemes were either mismanaged or explicitly designed to strengthen British migration. Rarely did they provide for Nordic migrants, who were required to self-fund their long journeys.⁵¹ By the early 1920s, the numbers of both Scandinavian immigrants and Scandinavian-born reported in the census had plummeted. John Stanley Martin and Olavi Koivukangas argue that this decline stemmed from the fact that 'Australia no longer exerted strong pull factors and that Scandinavian emigration was ebbing because of rapid industrialisation in the home countries'.⁵² Return migration was also a factor, especially after 1901.⁵³ As economic migrants, the Scandinavians were an unstable and fluctuating population, hard to attract – and retain – if economic conditions were unfavourable.⁵⁴ In the face of restrictive assimilation processes, Lyng's romantic vision of a thriving Scandinavian community was rapidly dwindling.

New hope appeared on the horizon in 1921, when the New Settlers' League was established by Prime Minister Hughes to 'prepare the way for settlers, to welcome them, to assure them they are not strangers in a strange land'.⁵⁵ The League was most active in Lyng's home state of Victoria, where it at one time

⁴⁷ Macintyre, *Oxford History of Australia, Volume 4*, 200.

⁴⁸ Commonwealth of Australia, *Immigration Act 1920*, Melbourne, Government Printer, 1920. Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C1920A00051> (accessed July 20, 2023). This act prohibited Germans, Austrian-Germans, Bulgarians, Hungarians, and Turks from entering Australia for five years from 2 December 1920, and was repealed in 1925; Gerhard Fischer, *Enemy Aliens: Internment and the Homefront Experience in Australia 1914–1920* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1989), 43, 47.

⁴⁹ Fischer, 6; Ann Curthoys, 'History and Identity', in *Creating Australia: Changing Australian History*, ed. Wayne Hudson and Geoffrey Bolton (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), 27–28.

⁵⁰ Roe, 23–29.

⁵¹ Roe notes that in 1921, most policy-makers assumed that these assistance schemes were only designed to provide aid to UK Britons, yet from April 1921 the Commonwealth-States scheme allowed nomination and fare-grants from a list of continental European states. Despite this, Prime Minister Hughes continued his focus on Britain as the prime source of Australia's new immigrants. Roe, 34.

⁵² Koivukangas and Martin, *Scandinavians in Australia*, 110.

⁵³ Koivukangas, 'Scandinavian Immigration', 188–89.

⁵⁴ Borrie, *Immigration*, 45.

⁵⁵ W. Hughes, 24 November 1921, cited in Roe, 246–47.

claimed to have 247 branches.⁵⁶ As Michael Roe points out, however, the League's professional organiser in Victoria, Archibald Gilchrist, was more concerned with developing country districts than assisting a variety of European migrants. His organisation was nationalist and protectionist in its goals and focused specifically on British migration.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the League appeared (at least initially) to offer Lyng an opportunity to lobby for his own community. In 1923, as Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce continued to espouse that Australia's primary aim was to 'populate her country and advance from her position of a very small people occupying a very vast territory', Lyng reorganised *Norden's* Scandinavian Progress Committee into a fee-paying Scandinavian Progress Association.⁵⁸ The association grew closer to the New Settlers' League though the work of Lyng and Melbourne Swede, Claes Anders Adelskold.⁵⁹ In September 1923, Adelskold attended the annual New Settlers' League conference as representative of the Scandinavian Progress Association. He excitedly reported to *Norden's* readers that the keynote speaker, Victorian Premier Harry Lawson, had been open to the idea of encouraging non-British European migrants, adding that:

if all his promises could in future be realized, this State of Victoria should in years to come be the happy hunting ground for all immigrants. Our land flowing with milk and honey is open to all, he did not even exclude us Scandinavians.⁶⁰

At the same time, Adelskold was discouraged by what he reported as a strong anti-foreigner sentiment at the conference, including towards the Scandinavians. Adelskold noted in particular that Victorian Minister for Lands, John Allan, had expressed his wish that Australia should recruit only British migrants. According to Adelskold, the overarching opinion appeared to be that:

Sturdy young men coming from foreign countries at their own expenses, and among them Danes, Norwegians and Swedes, [should continue to be] denied all the inducement and help and yet they make good in this country. Still the poor foreigners are told by the Minister of Lands that they can go to the devil.⁶¹

In the mind of Lyng and, we might presume, of his readers in the Scandinavian community, the prevailing focus on British migration was costing the Australian nation as well as threatening the future of their small ethnic community.

⁵⁶ Roe, 247.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Stanley Melbourne Bruce, cited in Macintyre, *Oxford History of Australia, Volume 4*, 200; 'To Be or not to Be', *Norden*, 24 November 1923, 1.

⁵⁹ Adelskold believed that the Scandinavian Progress Association was 'the only non-British organisation which had been fortunate enough to be admitted to the league'. Koivukangas and Martin, *Scandinavians in Australia*, 134; C.A. Adelskold, 'The New Settler's League: Lessons from the Annual Conference', *Norden*, 27 October 1923, 5.

⁶⁰ C.A. Adelskold, 'New Settlers League', *Norden*, 12 October 1923, 1.

⁶¹ Ibid.

In *Norden*, he reminded readers that ‘in other parts of the world and the British Dominions Danes, Norwegians and Swedes are in great demand and very welcome’, and that Canada’s government currently offered ‘conditions fully so good as the Australian Government are offering to British settlers here’.⁶² In an address before the League in November 1924, Lyng took his argument one step further: he stated that Danes specifically could be recruited without endangering White Australia because of their close racial kinship with the British majority, stating that there were ‘certain mental characteristics peculiar to Danes which make them desirable colonists ...’ and pointing to ‘their acknowledged skill in agriculture and Victoria’s need for skilled agriculturalists’.⁶³ Lyng’s speech was apparently well received by his audience, leading the Lord Mayor William Brunton to comment in response that Denmark should be given further thought as ‘the Danes were good colonisers, and would make desirable immigrants. The question of *alien* immigration was [however] involved, and it would necessitate deputations to the Federal Government’.⁶⁴

Increasingly, it seems that Lyng and Adelskold held out little hope for the British-focused New Settlers’ League to work around restrictive immigration policies in Australia. By 1924, Lyng had embarked on his own demographic research and scholarship as a potentially fruitful path towards promoting their agenda for increasing European immigration into the continent.

Contributing to The Peopling of Australia

In the years leading up to the publication of *Non-Britishers*, Lyng’s argument for development through increasing non-British European immigration was to become more pronounced. The study of Australian immigration, economic development, and population growth had been growing steadily during the interwar period, following Myra Willard’s groundbreaking publication, *A History of the White Australia Policy*, in 1923. In that book, Willard had asserted that immigration restriction was morally necessary to form a stable society built on strong sense of ‘British-Australian’ nationalism.⁶⁵ The task for Lyng would be to expand that notion to include Scandinavians. In the process, he argued for the contributions of racial and ethnic groups already within the nation.

In 1927, Lyng’s credibility as a future contributor to this field was strengthened when he, like Willard, was made Harbison-Higinbotham scholar at Melbourne University. The appointment provided him with a grant towards research for what would become *Non-Britishers in Australia*. During this time,

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ J. Lyng, ‘Denmark as a Recruiting Ground for Settlers: Paper Read before the “New Settler’s League”’, *Norden*, 22 November 1924, 5.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 5–6 [My emphasis].

⁶⁵ Myra Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1974); Tony Ohlsson, ‘Myra Willard and the Ghost of White Australia’, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 100, no. 1 (2020): 28.

Lyng made influential contacts with other scholars, such as the then Chair of History at the university, Sir Ernest Scott. Scott's experience as an immigrant journalist before moving into academia and his lack of formal qualifications mirrored Lyng's own background, as did his focus on the practical and empirical concerns of scholarly research.⁶⁶ Lyng was invited to contribute a chapter, which he would entitle 'Racial Composition of the Australian People', to the collection edited by P.D. Phillips and G.L. Wood, *The Peopling of Australia* (1928). He joined in this publication notable figures such as the zoologist W.E. Agar and medical doctor R.W. Cilento, who utilised biological understandings of race and eugenics to highlight the difficulties in maintaining White Australia, especially within tropical regions.⁶⁷ Despite Lyng's assertions of Nordic superiority, he pragmatically agreed with his fellow contributors that in imagining 'forces of nature in operation for, say, 20 generations – less than 500 years – ... it is, indeed, difficult in the end to visualise anything but a coloured population in tropic Australia'.⁶⁸

During this time, the pragmatic outlook of this scholarly network that promoted matters of migration as a scientific rather than jingoistic or populist concern was influential on Lyng's thinking. As argued in the next section, his own book, *Non-Britishers*, published a year earlier, had drawn from Phillips and Wood's promotion of migration as a matter for the sciences, not populist or racist thinking. That same scientific outlook would be reflected in a shift in Lyng's focus from his own interest as a Scandinavian towards a broader demographical and sociological approach to migration that emphasised Europeaness, but also the wider necessity for an inclusive, 'prodigiously blended' Australia. His unique contributions as both scholar and immigrant were commended by P.D. Phillips in his introduction. He wrote that 'Mr Lyng's paper is itself a valuable indication of the extremely mixed character of all modern nations, and may give us reason to pause before embarking upon too rigid of national discrimination with respect to immigrants'.⁶⁹

Non-Britishers in Australia

Many aspects of Lyng's argument in *Non-Britishers in Australia* reflect the pseudo-scientific justifications for racial hierarchies of his day. First and foremost, he organised his study by notions of 'race', asserting that 'while nationality,

⁶⁶ Fitzpatrick Kathleen, 'Scott, Sir Ernest (1867–1939)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (2005), <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/scott-sir-ernest-8367/text14683> (accessed 20 July 2023); See Stuart Macintyre, *A History for a Nation: Ernest Scott and the Making of Australian History* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994).

⁶⁷ P.D. Phillips and G.L. Wood, eds., *The Peopling of Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1928).

⁶⁸ Jens Lyng, 'Racial Composition of the Australian People', in Phillips and Wood, *The Peopling of Australia*, 164.

⁶⁹ P.D. Phillips, 'The Australian Population Problem', in Phillips and Wood, *The Peopling of Australia*, 28.

founded as it is on political boundaries, is ever changing, racial characteristics are passed on from generation to generation and are at best subject only to modification by environment during a long period of time'.⁷⁰ Lyng argued that better understanding the ties of race was a much more effective basis for immigration restriction than any politically constructed notions of nationhood. In this way, he sought to encourage a sense of European racial brotherhood over contemporary Australian policy that gave preference to British migrants.⁷¹ In contrast, people of colour were described by Lyng in typically xenophobic terms, casting Asian migration as a threat, and dismissing 'brown' people as being of lower capacity for the task of national development:

In Australia four out of five main groups into which mankind often is divided are represented – the black race from whom the country was taken by the white race – the yellow race who arrived later and threatened to submerge the white race – and finally the brown race whose representatives scour the hinterland as pedlars and camel-drivers.⁷²

Reflecting his interest in identifying supposedly stronger 'races' within the broader category of Europeans, Lyng wrote of three strains commonly proposed among racial theorists of the day: 'the Nordic or Aryan race; the Alpine (mainly Slavs); and the Mediterranean – which is often wrongly called the Latin race'.⁷³ Furthermore, he declared that a common racial ground existed between what Lyng calls 'true blue Nordics' and their 'mixed' British cousins.⁷⁴ According to Matthew Frye Jacobsen, this fracturing of 'whiteness' 'into a hierarchy of plural and scientifically determined white races' was used during the period of mass European immigration to white settler states such as the USA, Canada, and Australia between 1840 and 1924 to ostensibly differentiate between various 'invisible ethnic' groupings that, despite being equally of light of skin, maintained their own linguistic, cultural, parochial, emerging national, and class-based distinctions.⁷⁵ Lyng was a member of this same wave of European migration whose racial identities, notes Jacobsen, encompassed complex, pluralistic ideas such as 'white, Caucasian, Nordic, Anglo-Saxon, Celt, Slav, Alpine, Hebrew, Mediterranean, Iberic, Latin, and so on'.⁷⁶ Within this context, he sought to distinguish his individual community from other European minority groups as more desirable contributors to national development in Australia. At the same time, as reflected in his previous work in *Norden*, he hoped that the Scandinavians' sense of community, culture, and identity would not be lost to the advancing of British-Australian cultural homogeneity in a White Australia (Figure 1).

⁷⁰ Lyng, *Non-Britishers*, 2.

⁷¹ Curthoys, 'White, British, and European', 15–18.

⁷² Lyng, *Non-Britishers*, 2.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁵ Matthew Frye Jacobsen, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 7.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

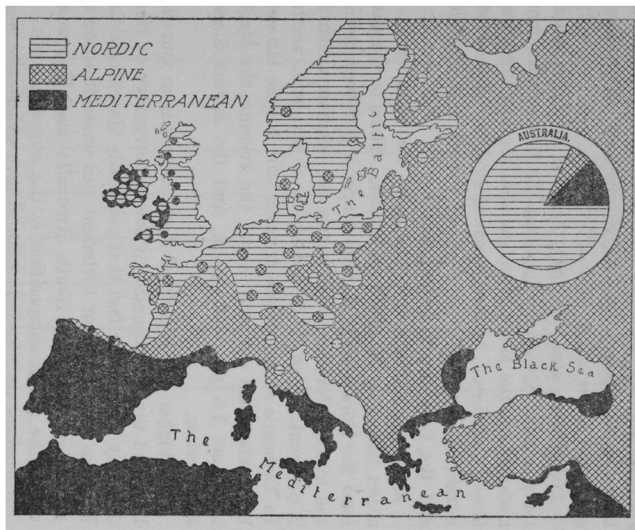


Figure 1. 'Composition of the Australian People', in Jens Lyng, *Non-Britishers in Australia: Influence on Population and Progress* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1927), 21. Lyng located Scandinavians, Germans and the English as belonging to the 'Nordic' race, endeavouring to further promote his own migrant group as racially superior, necessary to populating Australia with 'good Nordic stock'. Lyng notes that an increased 'mixing' of Germans with their Southern 'Alpine' neighbours, and the English with the 'Mediterranean' Irish, had led to a racial weakening of these populations. As such, Lyng's writings demonstrated a perceived strength of Scandinavians as a strong source of much needed immigrants for Australia, which sought to remain predominantly 'Nordic' in racial outlook (see inset in image above).

Lyng pointed out that the Australian population was already a mix of 82 per cent Nordic, 13 per cent Mediterranean, and 5 per cent Alpine stocks, his conclusion being that 'the best result ... is not obtained by racial purity, but by a judicious blending of the three, in the proportion most conducive to human progress'.⁷⁷ At the same time, Lyng discussed not only European 'races' but non-white groups (as noted above), systematically representing 'Yellow', 'Brown', and 'Black' races as useful, yet less suited to contributing to Australia's national development. Here Lyng often relied on the work of his intellectual idol Arthur de Gobineau.⁷⁸ In a rehearsal of contemporary racial theory influenced by Gobineau, he contrasted the supposed inertia and lesser capacity of these Yellow, Black, and Brown groups with his own Nordic sub-race, stating that:

The outstanding mental characteristic of the Nordics is their restless, creative energy. In this particular quality they surpass not only the other European stocks, but also all other branches of mankind. Extremely

⁷⁷ Lyng, *Non-Britishers*, 5.

⁷⁸ Scott, 'Foreword', vi; Lyng, *Non-Britishers*, 3.

race-conscious and politically efficient, they settled down as a ruling aristocracy in many lands.⁷⁹

By focusing on the superior racial qualities of his own 'Nordic' group, Lyng reiterated the social Darwinist thinking that informed the European empires' dominance of the globe as well the burgeoning eugenics movement.⁸⁰ In a similar vein, Lyng declared Pacific Island labourers used in the sugar industry in Queensland to be subservient, unintelligent, and new to the European civilising mission:

Owing to the low standard of civilisation of these people (Kanakas), none were so equipped mentally as to become outstanding. The highest any of them ever reached in the social scale was probably to the position of 'boss-boy', and occasionally to lay preacher when on Sundays the dusky sons and daughters of the Western Pacific gathered under some shady tree to listen to the gospel.⁸¹

At the same time as reiterating widely accepted notions of racial hierarchy, *Non-Britishers* included the non-white races in its account of the positive contributions made by each group towards Australian development. For example, while Lyng was sympathetic to the plight of the excluded Chinese, describing as unfair the discriminating policies of White Australia that forbade their naturalisation, he concluded that they were necessary to avoid the 'colour problem' as evidenced in the United States.⁸² Although he never wavered from seeing the Nordics as superior immigrants, Lyng implies that the other 'lesser' races could still be beneficial to Australia's future, especially if they could fulfil a pioneering and agricultural role in the harsh Australian climate. The Indians and Afghans, in another example, were favoured by Lyng for their hardiness and entrepreneurial spirit as outback merchants, servicing isolated settlers and moving much farther inland than he considered the white businessman would ever endure.⁸³ Lyng also wrote an extensive chapter on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, discussing their dispossession at the hands of white settlement and the history of racial conflict, but he asserted that 'owing to the incoherence of the aboriginals, their deficiency in racial pride, and their extreme primitiveness generally, conquest by the white race became easy'.⁸⁴ While patronising and dismissive of the plight of Australia's Indigenous populations, Lyng nevertheless advised that 'it is quite wrong to assume that the Australian aboriginals have nothing to give the white race', and that the resourcefulness of Indigenous peoples should be celebrated given their central role in primary production in

⁷⁹ Lyng, *Non-Britishers*, 9–10.

⁸⁰ W.E. Agar, 'Some Eugenic Aspects of Australian Population Problems', in Phillips and Wood, *The Peopling of Australia*.

⁸¹ Lyng, *Non-Britishers*, 192.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 171; Lake and Reynolds, 49–75, 310–15.

⁸³ Lyng, *Non-Britishers*, 183–88, 206.

⁸⁴ Russell McGregor, *Indifferent Inclusion: Aboriginal People and the Australian Nation* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2011), 1; Lyng, *Non-Britishers*, 200.

the Northern regions.⁸⁵ Through this racialised and hierarchical lens, Lyng focused on the opportunities such groups presented for the Australian nation, rather than advocating their continued exclusion or segregation. Lyng argued that to open the interior and increase agricultural production, the British alone could no longer be counted on in large numbers. He argued that a more realistic developmental goal would require mixing continental European migrants – in particular his favoured mix of Nordic and Alpine stock – into the white majority, while also including some non-white immigrants and Indigenous Australians as well.⁸⁶ In appealing to policy-makers to make further migration more accessible to Northern Europeans, Lyng concluded that some racial ‘blending’ combined with a diversity of cultural life would provide the basis for a harmonious and productive Australia:

nothing is so soul-destroying as uniformity ... It is the blending of a multitude of colours into a harmonic whole which makes a picture delightful. Only the blending of individuals – Mediterranean, Alpines, Nordics, and even coloured peoples, if possible of assimilation into the composite body – possessing different gifts, ideas, traditions, outlook on life, characteristics, physical features, and so forth, all working for the common good, makes life rich and full and worth while living.⁸⁷

During the height of White Australia, such statements that included non-white peoples as part of the nation-building process, even if expressed in racist terms and asserting European superiority, were progressive. Lyng’s decision to separate ‘Britishers’ from all other immigrants and deal only with the ‘foreigner’ elements of society pushed back against dominant ideals of British-Australian cultural hegemony in favour of a somewhat ethnically pluralist state. This relatively progressive worldview was evident also in his work with the Scandinavian Progress Association, and in his frustrations with both the Australian government and New Settlers’ League for promoting British immigrants above all others. His demarcation of accepted and questionable residents along lines that did not fully align with race, but instead contrasted British ‘citizen familiar’ with non-Britisher ‘resident alien’, marked Lyng’s efforts to educate a largely British-Australian audience regarding the foreigner’s positive role in Australian nation-building. While Lyng promoted his own group, the Scandinavians, as the first in line to greater immigration opportunities after the British themselves, through his systematic discussion of variegated ‘white’ and ‘non-white’ minorities Lyng argued that *all* people of non-British descent had some role to play in the nation’s development.

⁸⁵ Lyng, *Non-Britishers*, 205–06.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 228.

The enduring impact of Jens Lyng and Non-Britishers

In his foreword to the publication, Ernest Scott wrote that *Non-Britishers* was 'a piece of Australian sociological literature [that] fills a place which no previous work has occupied'.⁸⁸ Lyng's work was also well received in the press where it was routinely praised for its careful analysis of how to optimise the racial mix within Australia to suit the developing nation. The *Maitland Weekly Mercury*, for instance, advised readers that *Non-Britishers* examined 'a fascinating topic, not systematically dealt with before', complementing its thoroughness in considering the contributions of all races to Australia's development.⁸⁹ In a detailed half-page response appearing in the *Brisbane Courier*, another reviewer noted that one theme in *Non-Britishers* was the contributions to Australian life made by some minority groups, making special note of Lyng's argument that citizens of all races and backgrounds were owed a debt of gratitude because 'in the great majority of cases they have proved to be good settlers'.⁹⁰ Newspapers such as *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, however, were less enthusiastic about Lyng's more controversial findings on racial and cultural mixing, preferring the book's (admittedly) more dominant theme of racial hierarchies. These newspapers focused on passages from *Non-Britishers* emphasising the role of Nordic migrants in preserving White Australian ideals of racial purity and in protecting the nation from societal disruption or economic calamity.⁹¹ Conversely, some academic criticism directed at the work, by reviewers such as British geologist and explorer J.W. Gregory, asserted that Lyng was 'too much influenced by the Nordic myth'.⁹²

In 1928 Lyng relocated to Canberra to work with the Commonwealth Bureau of Statistics. There he completed another serialised volume, *The Road to Canberra*, about the founding of the capital. Meanwhile, *Non-Britishers* was reprinted in a second edition in 1935, garnering new interest in the author's life.⁹³ Despite this enthusiasm for his population work, Lyng returned to his earlier interest in biographic histories of Australian development in relation to his own Scandinavian people. Retiring in 1932, Lyng returned to Melbourne in 1937, where he wrote his last work and part memoir, *The Scandinavians in Australia, New Zealand and the Western Pacific*, in

⁸⁸ Scott, 'Foreword', vii.

⁸⁹ 'Non-Britishers in Australia', *The Maitland Weekly Mercury*, 12 November 1927, 14.

⁹⁰ J.R.W. Taylor, 'Non-Britishers in Australia. Our Surprising Debt to Them', *The Brisbane Courier*, 29 October 1927, 23.

⁹¹ 'Non-Britishers in Australia', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 September 1927, 11; 'Non-British Elements' *The Age*, 17 September 1927, 6.

⁹² J.W. Gregory, 'Review of *The Peopling of Australia* by P.D. Phillips and G.D. Wood', *The Geographical Journal* 74, no. 3 (September 1929): 290. While Gregory's review deals with a published chapter by Lyng, 'Racial Composition of the Australian People', this chapter is lifted directly from *Non-Britishers in Australia*.

⁹³ Jens Lyng, *Non-Britishers in Australia: Influence on Population and Progress* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1935). The second edition included a new appendix detailing immigration between 1921 and 1933.

1939.⁹⁴ He died in 1941. Unfortunately, his life-long goals of replenishing his dwindling ethnic community through further Scandinavian immigration had not eventuated.

Nonetheless, Lyng's study of migration would influence many later scholars. During the 1930s, population issues remained at the forefront of Australian demographic studies, several referring to Lyng in terms of his account of population statistics and racial groupings, in their efforts to promote further British migration.⁹⁵ Whatever the complexity of his position, as outlined above, it would be Lyng's 'scientifically supported' racial hierarchies that were most remembered, being regularly redeployed in support of the exclusionary ideals of White Australia, and even to further racialise Southern Europeans such as Italians and Greeks.⁹⁶ After Lyng's death, selections of *Non-Britishers* were translated in Germany in 1944, linking his account of Aryan superiority with the Third Reich and, then, with the Reich's defeat in 1945, with the downfall of race-based systems of human categorisation globally.⁹⁷ Despite such turns, as the White Australia policy was increasingly questioned in the postwar period, Lyng's interwar argument that White Australia had never held true continued to influence the studies of W.D. Borrie and A.P. Elkin, who utilised and recommended Lyng as a forerunner in thinking about 'race' in the national story of Australia.⁹⁸ Borrie's contemporaries, Charles Price and A.C. Palfreeman, drew from Lyng's work in statistics and racial census.⁹⁹

By the 1970s, a policy of multiculturalism further distanced Australian society from its ideological roots in White Australia. New studies of the White Australia policy by Herbert London and by Kenneth Rivett returned the 'non-white' migrant to the fore, much as Lyng had done half a century before, if in this case aiming at progressive ideas of multiculturalism rather than racial assimilation and integration.¹⁰⁰ Due to the broad scope of *Non-Britishers*, many new ethnic studies scholars began by considering Lyng's now dated publication. Despite its racially imbued worldview, many early ethnic histories of migrant groups such as the Chinese, Germans, and Scandinavians referred to *Non-Britishers* as a trustworthy source for census data and settlement patterns, the dearth of research in the area of immigrant minorities requiring them to look

⁹⁴ Jens Lyng, *The Scandinavians in Australia, New Zealand and the Western Pacific* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1939).

⁹⁵ G.L. Wood, 'Immigration and Industry', in Phillips and Wood, *The Peopling of Australia*, 125; Herbert Burton, 'Historical Survey of Immigration', in *The Peopling of Australia (Further Studies)*, ed. K.H. Bailey and F.W. Eggleston (London: Dawsons, 1933/1968), 35–68.

⁹⁶ Piperoglou, 522; Dewhirst, 326.

⁹⁷ Jens Lyng, *Die kleineren europäischen Volksgruppen Australiens/von Jens Lyng; aus dem Englischen übersetzt von Line Welter* (Stuttgart: Publikationsstelle Stuttgart-Hamburg, 1944).

⁹⁸ *A White Australia: Australia's Population Problem*, ed. W.D. Borrie and A.P. Elkin (Sydney: Australian Institute of Political Science, 1947); Borrie, *Immigration*, 88, 97.

⁹⁹ Price, xii, 2; A.C. Palfreeman, *The Administration of the White Australia Policy* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 139–52.

¹⁰⁰ Herbert London, *Non-White Immigration and the White Australia Policy* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1970); Kenneth Rivett and the Immigration Reform Group, *Australia and the Non-White Migrant* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1975).

past Lyng's racial categorisations.¹⁰¹ In the 1980s and 1990s, a more critical appraisal of the historical antecedents to White Australia and immigration restriction, and the controversial works of Geoffrey Blainey, led scholars such as Andrew Markus to rightly place Lyng alongside other prominent race-minded thinkers such as C.H. Pearson and Alfred Deakin, and to focus critical attention on the contributions of such racist and xenophobic literature to policies of exclusion.¹⁰² Indeed, the celebratory immigration studies by James Jupp and by Barry York in the 1990s made very little reference to *Non-Britishers*. In his contribution to Jupp's influential edited collection *The Australian People*, John Stanley Martin used Lyng's other historical works to inform his account of Scandinavian immigrants in Australia, rather than engage with the racially problematic *Non-Britishers* more directly.¹⁰³ With the turn to cultural history and whiteness studies from the early 2000s – and, notably, the work of scholars such as Hsu-Ming Teo, Anderson, and Lake and Reynolds – interest in Lyng resurged, albeit as a racist social scientist indicating a historical worldview, rather than as a founding member of Scandinavian immigrant identity in Australia or as a leading figure in the emerging discipline of ethnic studies.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

From this examination of aspects of Jens Lyng's career, it has been possible to see how, in the age of immigration restriction and scientific racism, Lyng's Scandinavian heritage contributed to his ideas about the racial composition of Australia in which his own people should be elevated. As has been shown, Lyng's methodologies and viewpoints were racist in ways that justified a White Australia, but not based on the exclusion of non-white or the reification of British-Australian cultural hegemony which he saw as limiting Australia's potential.

As a racially white, continental European migrant in a predominantly British-Australian society, Jens Lyng was in a unique position to comment on the future of the Australian nation. While scientific racist thinking and his diasporic Scandinavian heritage allowed Lyng to view himself as 'whiter' than British-Australia given its already mixed heritage, his status as a non-British European migrant also saw him spend a considerable part of his life researching

¹⁰¹ See C.Y. Choi, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1975), 53; Ian Harmsdorf and Michael Cigler, *The Germans in Australia* (Melbourne: AE Press, 1985); Koivukangas and Martin, *Scandinavians in Australia*; Sherington, *Australia's Immigrants*.

¹⁰² Andrew Markus, '1984 or 1901? Immigration and Some "Lessons" of Australian History', in *Sur-render Australia? Essays in the Study and Uses of History: Geoffrey Blainey and Asian Immigration*, ed. Andrew Markus and M.C. Ricklefs (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985), 12.

¹⁰³ See James Jupp, *Immigration* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1991); Barry York, *Ethno-Historical Studies in a Multicultural Australia* (Canberra: Centre for Immigration & Multicultural Studies, 1996); Barry York, *Racial Characteristics of the Australian People: Commonwealth Censuses 1911–1966* (Canberra: Centre for Immigration & Multicultural Studies, 1996); John Stanley Martin, 'Danes', in *The Australian People*, ed. James Jupp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001), 254.

¹⁰⁴ Hsu-Ming Teo, 'Multiculturalism', 142–57; n 160–01; Lake and Reynolds, 310–15.

and writing about the contributions of his group and, by extension, of other non-British migrants who remained uncelebrated. Lyng's immigrant experiences and their intersection with themes of race, empire, nation, and diaspora arguably led him to study these overlooked minority groups and to promote their inclusion in Australian society, according to his own version of a racial hierarchy, at a time when Australians assumed that their social homogeneity was based on their ties with Britain. As such, Lyng's work illustrates the interpolations of progressivism and racism in the era of White Australia. The life and career of this influential author demonstrate that ethnic inclusiveness (now widely seen as 'progressive') could be (and once was) advocated through a racialised intellectual framework that is now widely condemned as racism.

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