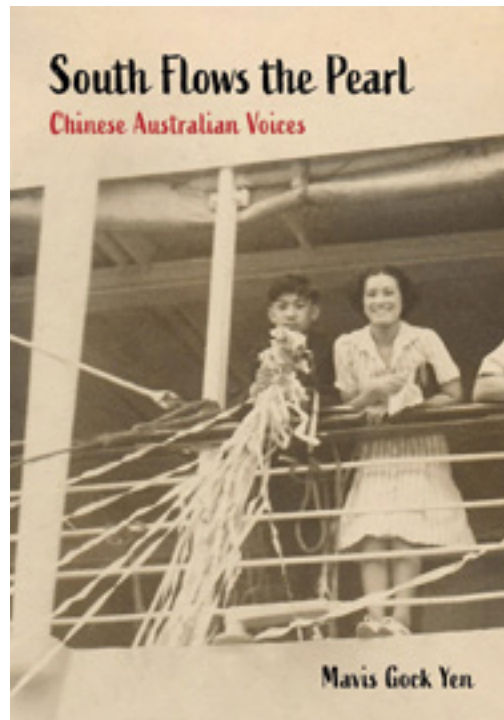


Reviews



South Flows the Pearl: Chinese Australian Voices,
Mavis Gock Yen

*Edited by Siaoman Yen and Richard Horsburgh, and
introduction by Sophie Loy-Wilson. Sydney University
Press, Sydney, 2022. 386 pages. \$40.00 (paperback).
ISBN 9781743327241.*

REVIEWED BY CHRISTOPHER CHENG,
Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University

A new wave of Chinese migrants arrived in Australia in the 1980s. These newcomers, having arrived in a post-assimilationist multicultural Australia, were more culturally aware than their nineteenth-century predecessors. The book under review considers an earlier period of Australian history. Chronicling the time that preceded Australia's multiculturalism, *South Flows the Pearl* is a collection of single-person narratives with twelve then-elderly Chinese Australians who lived through the era of 'White Australia'. Only one of the interlocutors was alive at the time of publication.

Author Mavis Gock Yen went through the Cultural Revolution (1967–76) in China. Her experience during that period prompted her to undertake an oral history project in Australia, recording interviews with Chinese Australians between 1987 and 1995 with the aim of recording their various life experiences. Stepping away from the type of history penned by European ‘outsiders’, this self-initiated project was conceived by an ‘insider’ who understood the complexities of her subjects’ lives. Not only had Mavis lived through the latter part of the same historical period as her subjects, but she also spoke the same languages. Like the narrators, Mavis was considered a foreigner in ‘her country’, whether she was in China or Australia. She too experienced discrimination, a family divided by geopolitics, and felt excluded from the national history in both Australia and China. During the assimilation period, the Chinese in Australia were ridiculed for not being ‘white’ (or ‘Australian’) enough. The same people would again be alienated with the advent of multiculturalism, and particularly the arrival of the new Chinese – this time, for not being ‘Chinese’ enough.

Various themes run through the volume, one of them being discrimination. Many narrators recall all kinds of insults and nicknames: not just stereotypical ‘Ching Chong Chinaman’, but also a gamut of southern Chinese appellations used by fellow Chinese, for example, *gum shan haak* (金山客, gold mountain guests), *choy gee lo* (財主佬, rich fellow), *tai jee jay* (太子仔, crown prince), *loi lek bat ming* (來歷不明, of unknown provenance) (p. 10). While some learnt to defend themselves by fighting back, others got used to it and ignored it over time. These accounts, of both the discrimination and responses to it, and accounts of it coming from within the Chinese community, enrich our understanding of the diversity of the Chinese-Australian experiences.

Despite experiences of discrimination, Australia remained a desirable destination for Chinese people, due mainly to the perception of opportunity. During the gold rush era, there was a belief that gold could be ‘picked up off the ground’ (p. 99), and that wealth was easily acquired. This theme persisted well into the twentieth century: as late as 1977 returnees to China and Hong Kong were viewed as ‘millionaires’ by relatives (p. 310). But for those who ventured abroad, their realities in the ‘Gold Mountain’ were often far from that: instead, wealth was gained through labour,

often confined to vegetable and market gardens or in Chinatown. Evelyn Yin Lo, for example, remembers how, in the post-war period, her poor mother 'never stopped working, not even for one day' (p. 241). Another theme that emerges is work ethic.

An interesting theme the book picks up on is the impact of peoples' return to China. For example, up to the early twentieth century, emigrants returned to their ancestral home in China's Pearl River Delta to build brick houses (pp. 68, 98, 136, 346) and invest in rice paddies or businesses (pp. 69, 143). All these transformed the fate of the villagers living in south China, bringing with them a perceived prosperity. But behind the benefits of emigration, lurked the curse of sudden wealth, where the spendthrift sons or grandson (*tai jee jay*) 'bludged on the labours of their [fore]fathers' (p. 98). In still-poor rural China, rising affluence of emigrant families depending on Australian remittances, left such families in China living in constant fear of robbery, kidnapping, and even murder (pp. 139, 155).

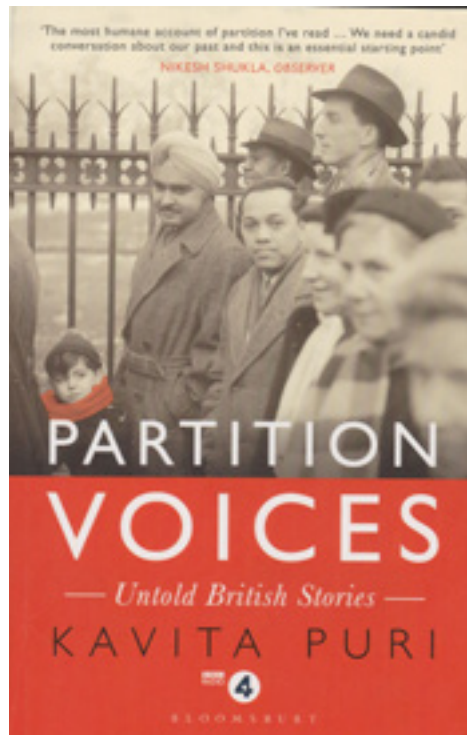
With interviews held far away from ancestral villages, a strength of the book is the author's skilful navigation between two worlds and two languages. Two interviews were recorded in Cantonese, while the rest (n=10) were in vernacular Australian-English. Words like *larrikin* (p. 128), *dump* (p. 346), *mate* (p.157) and *outback* (p. 90) pepper the text. Interestingly, those who spoke Cantonese generally tend not to consider themselves Australians; this was not because of exclusionary policies, but due to linguistic and cultural reasons that underpinned a tendency to self-identify as Chinese rather than Australian.

The book also describes the emergence of a Chinese-Australian identity: those who looked Chinese, but their minds were Australian (p. 257). An example is Elizabeth Lee, who vowed to never ask her children for money (p. 351). Western notions of equity and independence prevailed here, even if her ancestors depended on their children. In this way, the narratives offer a repertoire of instances of being 'fair dinkum Aussies', thus enriching Australian identity and history. In thought, language and experience, the book certainly documents an Australian way of life, albeit through Chinese bodies.

Written at a time when first-hand materials of the Chinese experience in Australia were limited, *South Flows the Pearl* is a much-welcomed addition to Chinese-Australian historiography. Chinese-Australian voices, especially during White Australia, remain conspicuously absent. As a collection of oral history on Chinese-Australian migration, the book also speaks to the future, allowing the Chinese in Australia to reclaim their own history, on their own terms.

One missed opportunity, however, was to invite someone to review the Chinese characters quoted in the text. Mavis' daughter Siaoman, who is also one of the book's editors and worked on the taped records left by her mother after her death, is also bilingual – but in Mandarin, so incorrect Chinese characters are found accompanying the Cantonese and other southern Chinese expressions in the text.

Nonetheless, this does not detract from the immense value of this historical record. Indeed, the very existence of this once-forgotten manuscript, first produced by Mavis in the late 1990s, after her interviews were completed in 1995, also raises the question of whether other unfinished or abandoned oral history projects are stashed away on old floppy disks and cassette tapes, waiting for the descendants of Australia's first oral historians to salvage them. Beyond that, this project also shows that much work remains to be done to produce more multilingual oral histories that capture first-hand immigrant narratives before a more inclusive Australian history can be compiled.



Partition Voices: Untold British Stories, Kavita Puri

Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2019. 320 pages.

\$37.99 (hardback). ISBN 9781408899076.

REVIEWED BY SUZANNE MULLIGAN

The Partition of India in August 1947 is told in Kavita Puri's *Partition Voices*, through the stories of 22 interviewees who witnessed this tragedy. Until Partition, the British ruled present-day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Puri's interviewees – from many religious backgrounds – migrated to Britain in the aftermath of Partition. The British planned to partition India along religious lines in 1948. Then with barely two months' notice it was brought forward to August 1947, with tragic consequences. Until then, people from the many religious backgrounds had lived together mostly peaceably.

Following Partition, large groups of people moved between the newly formed states which were demarcated by religion. Millions died during riots and civil unrest as Muslims scrambled to move to Pakistan, and Hindus and Sikhs moved to India; many more millions were displaced. When survivors arrived in Britain, they faced new challenges: they wanted to make a life, raise a family, and not dwell on the past. As a result, their stories remained untold for many years.

The 70th anniversary of Partition in 2017 stirred interest in this history. As Puri notes, 'Oral history projects are now taking place across Britain...and there is a hunger to record these stories' (p. 5). Karam Singh Hamdard, a Sikh, grew up in a small 'mixed' village of about 200 people. His grandson, Jasmeet, 'who said his grandfather had a story to share' (p. 109), contacted the author. Karam's family did not believe they were in danger until Muslims from other villages arrived. His mother had an injury that prevented her from walking, so she remained while her family fled. Puri says thinking about Karam still leaves her 'feeling unsettled' and with questions – was it the right thing to ask people 'to remember such traumatic events' (p. 115). Karam's memories are still very painful, his emotions still raw. However, he 'wanted his story heard and preserved' (p. 115).

During oral history interviews, silences are sometimes louder than voices. Iftkahr Ahmed, a Muslim who was 17 years old and living in India at the time of Partition, said, 'India was my home'. The author noted of Iftkahr's interviews: 'sometimes we lose him altogether. I see him drift off, staring outside somewhere beyond the window. We are all quiet, respectful. We all feel it' (p. 172).

Amidst the carnage of Partition there emerged stories of acts of kindness towards those left on the 'wrong side'. Khurshid Sultana, then a five-year-old Muslim girl, tells of a pregnant relative who was protected by an old Sikh man. Khurshid was not a witness to her relative's experience, but the story has passed into her family's 'collective recollection of that time' (p. 182). It is important to Khurshid, and to other interviewees, that 'kindness and humanity are remembered amidst the terror' (p. 182).

The final chapter is devoted to Puri's interview with her father, Ravi Datt Puri, who was born in 1935 in Lahore, Punjab. Twelve years old at the time of Partition, he

did not relate his experiences until 70 years later. Puri tells of her father's reaction to the 70th anniversary: he was 'slightly bemused by the interest, on television and in the newspapers', as though Britain had 'just realised that partition happened' (p. 251). Ravi told his daughter he had a 'peaceful and safe childhood' in Lahore. His primary school had Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus. However, at the start of 1947 'things deteriorated very rapidly'. After a Muslim fruit seller known to Ravi's family was murdered by a Hindu man, his family moved out of Lahore to Moga where they all felt safe. When the new borders were announced, they were fortunate that Moga was still in India. But then the atrocities began for those who were seen to be in the 'wrong' country. Many Muslims left in India were slaughtered; Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan were also killed. The author shows, 'The statistics are hard to comprehend, and yet behind every single number is a story' (p. 1).

Until she started speaking to Partition survivors, Puri had not realised this was a largely unknown chapter in British history. Many may have heard of it as simply a carving up of the Empire of India into India and Pakistan without an understanding of the enormous ramifications Partition had on millions of people. Those displaced by Partition, who had lived peacefully together for generations, sought safety, and for many that was found in Britain where they arrived as refugees. Interviewee Nirmal Joshi said of this: 'there is no disgrace in talking about that...it is no crime to be a refugee' (p. 223). This observation resonates today as the world grapples with refugees in crisis, seeking a safer life for their families.

Accounts of the terrible deeds perpetrated in the aftermath of Partition make for confronting reading. The book is based on oral history interviews undertaken for a Radio 4 series titled *Partition Voices*, which is available online <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b090rrl0>. The transcripts and oral recordings are held in the British Library Sound Archive. In the stories we hear the emotions, fear, loss of homeland, grief, and relief upon finding safety. This project demonstrates the power of learning history through listening, and the value of oral histories in bringing to life stories that might otherwise have remained untold.



***Migrant Representations: Life Story, Investigation,
Picture, Peter Leese***

*Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2022. 304 pp.
£95.00 (hardback). ISBN 9781802070156.*

REVIEWED BY FRANCESCO RICATTI,
Australian National University

At a recent historical conference in Australia, I was reminded of how often historiographical innovations have come from historians who don't work in history departments and programs, but rather in language, literature, cultural studies, area studies, and other disciplines. This is perhaps because many of these historians have been exposed to other disciplines and approaches. Or perhaps because they have enjoyed a kind of theoretical and methodological freedom that is usually denied to disciplined historians. Peter Leese is a cultural historian working at the Institute

of English, Germanic and Romance Studies at the University of Copenhagen, and his new book, *Migrant Representations: Life Story, Investigation, Picture*, provides an original and important contribution to this historiographical tradition.

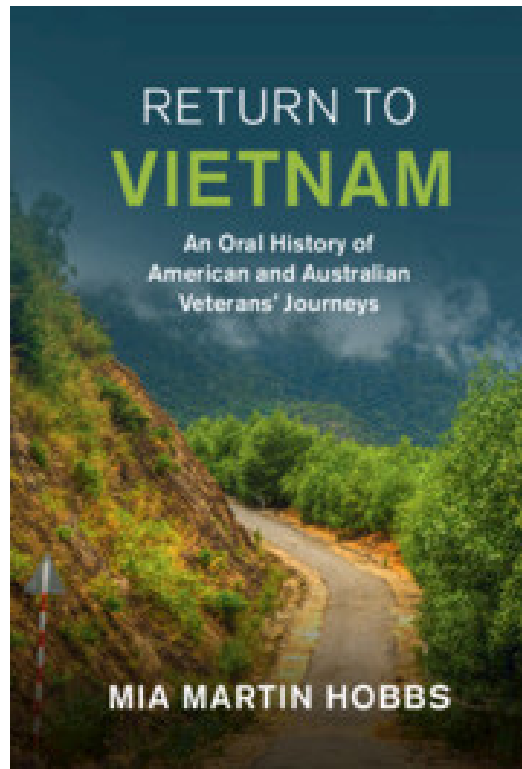
This is a book of incredible courage, vision, creativity and substance. Leese does not settle for the typical job of an historian – developing a somehow coherent narrative about the past, as shaped by the critical analysis of historical documents. Nor does his book follow postmodern approaches, in which too often convoluted theories end up killing any narrative appeal or any precise historical contextualisation. Instead, seeking a perhaps impossible balance, Leese embarks on *a tour de force* across 24 comparative case studies from the late eighteenth century to the new millennium, in order to show how migrant representations produce complex, unsettling and subversive renderings of transnational histories. These case studies are always at once closely contextualised and bravely juxtaposed to produce provocations, ruptures and an altogether new understanding of the multiple roles that migrant representations play in the lives of migrants and in the development of complex multicultural societies.

It is impossible to summarise such a rich and complex book in just a few hundred words, but the key questions the book addresses are (i) how migrants see themselves and are seen by others, and (ii) how the constant tensions and negotiations between these two perspectives have transformed the migrant image across time and space. In order to answer these questions, Leese explores how migrants have represented themselves, how they have been investigated (for instance by missionaries, anthropologists and sociologists), and how they have been visualised (in photographs, films and through other media). Central to Leese's analysis is the constant gaze that migrants endure, and how they negotiate such gaze to their own advantage, or at least for their own survival.

While the case studies are incredibly varied, they are all loosely connected to Britain. A 'female vagrant' in the early nineteenth century and a 'gangrel' in the late part of the same century may also share comparable autobiographical stories of religious conversion. The autobiographies of a Northern Indian indentured labourer and the famous actor Charlie Chaplin may be juxtaposed to show how remarkably

different life stories can in fact reveal similar abilities of adaptation to the new conditions encountered in the process of migration, or similar desires to adjust memories of migration retrospectively. In another chapter, the purportedly accurate representation of Asian migrants and the caricature of an Irish migrant, both from mid-nineteenth-century England, allow an original reflection on the power of racialised discourse to influence migrants' lives, but also on migrants' ability to challenge stereotypical and ideological representations. Many more stories and images, critically analysed by Leese with great attention to details and historical contexts, invite the readers to reflect on unusual and meaningful connections across time, space, genres and ideologies, revealing the constant processes of negotiation between what Leese describes as the 'general', the 'observer' and the 'migrant' views of migrants. In these remarkably varied and different migrant representations we can note the emergence of clear patterns: the reciprocal influences between orality, writing, and visual representations; the persisting tension between hypervisibility and invisibility; and the representations of migrants as strangers, victims, frauds, witnesses and self-made people. But beyond these archetypes, Leese helps us see the complexity of lives, memories and ideologies that rarely fit neatly within a stereotypical or ideological understanding of mobility and migration.

Many of us live in countries in which the public discourse about migration is grotesquely dominated by the increasing radicalisation of the ideologues and perpetrators of racist capitalism. They constantly promote and implement border violence, human rights violation, and the marginalisation and exploitation of migrants, especially those who are temporary or irregular. In this context, the greatest contribution of this book is for me in its rendering of complex, fluid and ever-changing migrant realities, lives, memories, stories, visualisations and representations. Ultimately, this is a history that consciously engages with such complexity, from a multisited and multidisciplinary perspective, while constantly reaffirming the value of specific historicisation. In doing so, the book may prove to be an invaluable resource not only for scholars of migration history, but also for scholars, teachers and students of sociology, anthropology, cultural, literary and media studies who have a keen interest in complex societies shaped by processes of migration, transculturation, storytelling and representation.



Return to Vietnam: An Oral History of American and Australian Veterans' Journeys, Mia Martin Hobbs

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2021. 273 pages. \$141.95 (hardback). ISBN 9781108832663.

REVIEWED BY NOAH RISEMAN,
Australian Catholic University

Innovative is the best word to describe Mia Martin Hobbs' book *Return to Vietnam*. The very project idea – to explore the experiences, memories and legacies of American and Australian veterans returning to Vietnam – is original. Indeed, while there has been great interest in Australia around pilgrimages to battlefields (see especially the work of Bruce Scates), what sets Hobbs' book apart is that the pilgrims were the very men (and yes, they were all men) who fought in the war. The final product is a book

that is layered with intersecting areas of analysis around memorialisation, space, memory, tourism, and, of course, military and oral history.

Hobbs interviewed 54 veterans for her project and also engaged with existing oral history interviews, memoirs, and newspaper or magazine accounts. The comparative approach, working with both American and Australian veterans, is both original and generates insightful analysis. Twenty-three of her interview participants were Australian and 31 American. She acknowledges that this breakdown does not reflect the demographics of service in Vietnam – nor does the fact that all but one interview participant was white. This is not a limitation on her analysis per se, as Hobbs still effectively compares and contrasts the memories and experiences of the American and Australian veterans. Moreover, it highlights the scope for future projects examining the return experiences of Black, Native American, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Latino, Asian and other non-white veterans.

Return to Vietnam is organised thematically and chronologically around three eras in which the veterans visited Vietnam, which she refers to as Reconciliation (1981–94), Normalization (1995–2005) and Commemoration (2006–16). Hobbs explores the dominant characteristics around why veterans returned during the respective eras, the receptions they received by the Vietnamese government and locals, and the ways that veterans conceptualised the war and its legacies both within Vietnam and at home.

As the term suggests, the Reconciliation period was predominantly a time when veterans returned to Vietnam with special permission as part of peace or goodwill tours to promote better relations between Vietnam and the home countries (mostly the US during that period; few Australian veterans visited during the Reconciliation era). Under Normalization, as relations opened between the US and Vietnam, more veterans were able to return and continued to promote better relations between the countries. Indeed, this era seems marked especially around stories of veterans revisiting sites of trauma and meeting with former Vietnamese foes. Healing – both national and personal – is a big theme among veterans who travelled during both the Reconciliation and Normalization periods. The Commemoration era was when the

advent of cheaper travel enabled more veterans from both countries to visit Vietnam. Their visits focused more on commemorating their own war experiences, arguably even trying to recolonise spaces (for example, Long Tan) as national sites.

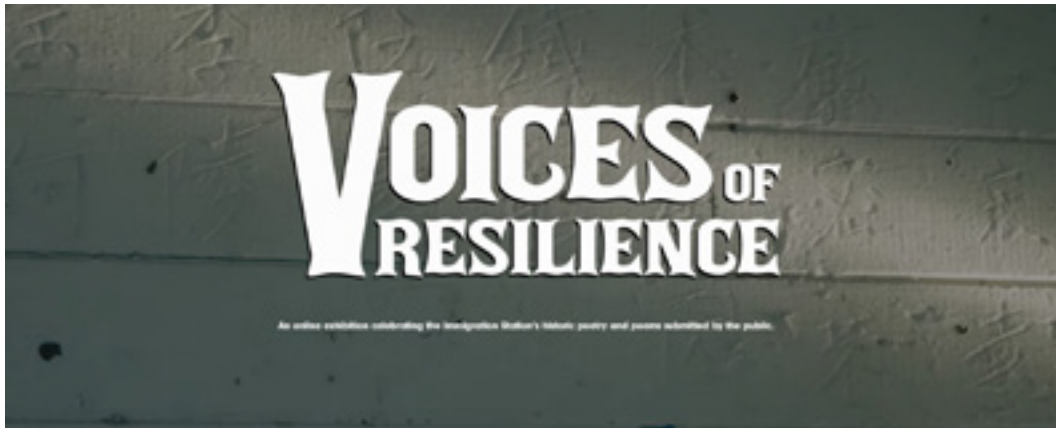
Hobbs draws on a range of conceptual ideas around memorialisation, oral history (especially theory about composure and memory), trauma, healing and – what I found especially innovative – diaspora studies. Indeed, the use of diaspora is an innovative spin which, as Hobbs summarises, marks Vietnam veterans as a community ‘forged in war, sustained by ongoing debates about the war and its legacies in Australia and the United States, and linked by a shared, lost warzone home’ (p. 3).

Looming large across the book is a paradoxical set of diverging memories around the countries’ respective war experiences. Scholars such as Jeffrey Grey and Ann Curthoys have long showed how American narratives of the Vietnam War influenced and shaped dominant Australian narratives of the war and anti-war movement. Hobbs’ research through the pilgrimage lens shows how Australian veterans have almost simultaneously assimilated the American narratives of war (and especially the anti-war movement) into their composed memories, while at the same time consciously trying to differentiate their wartime experiences. Australian veterans’ need to differentiate their war from the Americans played out in how Australian veterans interacted with local Vietnamese, assumed ownership over sites like Long Tan and Vung Tau and talked about their wartime experiences.

It is also interesting how Australian veterans almost unanimously condemn the anti-war movement (something I have come across in my own research with Australian Indigenous and LGBTIQ+ Vietnam veterans). In contrast, many of the American veterans whom Hobbs interviewed joined the anti-war movement. These types of distinctions really highlight the importance of comparative historical analysis and are a strength of the book.

If I were to indicate one weakness of *Return to Vietnam*, it is that the distinctions between the Reconciliation and Normalization eras seem nebulous. At one stage Hobbs devotes a few pages to outline the differences at great length, which in itself highlights the blurred distinctions between these eras. This is not a significant

weakness, nor does it undermine the fantastic analysis that permeates the book. Indeed, *Return to Vietnam* brings a refreshing new lens to histories of the Vietnam War and its legacies.



***Voices of Resilience: An Online Exhibition Celebrating
the Immigration Station's Historic Poetry and Poems
Submitted by the Public, Russell Nauman and Edward
Tepporn (Curators)***

<https://www.aiisf.org/voicesofresilience>

REVIEWED BY SOPHIE LOY-WILSON,
University of Sydney

In 2019 at an academic conference, I watched a presentation about an exhibition which featured the mobile phone Kurdish journalist Behrouz Boochani used to write a novel while imprisoned by the Australian Government on Manus Island from 2013 to 2019. Typing at night via WhatsApp, he wrote *No Friend but the Mountain* in unimaginable circumstances, on that mobile phone – a book that would go on to win Australia's richest literary prize, the Victoria Prize for Literature. The mobile phone looked so small in the photos I saw, so insignificant, yet from this device Boochani asserted his humanity even while it was being stripped away from him – for isn't this what immigration detention is about at its core – the denial of our shared humanity? Against the odds, Boochani wrote and his collaborators in

Australia, Moones Mansoubi and Omid Tofghian, chose to listen, and Boochani's experiences of detention were smuggled out on 114 PDF files.

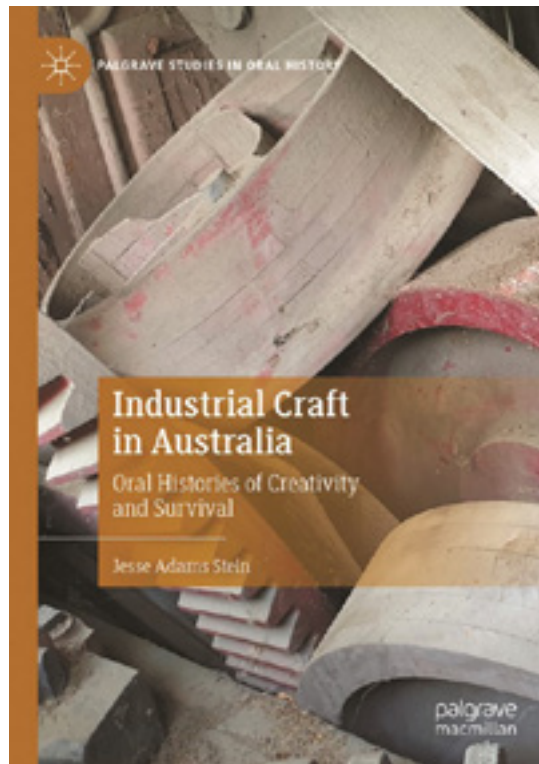
Over a hundred years earlier, across the oceans, migrants detained at the Angel Island detention centre in San Francisco scratched poetry onto the walls of their prison, hundreds and hundreds of poems cut into the wood. 'What can one sad person say to another?' reads one of these poems, 'Unfortunate travellers everywhere wish to commiserate. Life doesn't have to be demeaning'. Over 600 poems have survived, largely written by Chinese migrants in Chinese languages such as Toishanese, but some in Korean, Japanese, English, and others in European and South Asian languages. They were nearly all lost in the 1970s when Angel Island was scheduled for demolition, but park ranger Andrew Weiss had seen the poems when he walked through the immigration station with a flashlight and – defying orders – he set about working to preserve them. The walls spoke to him, and Weiss chose to listen. He contacted San Francisco's Chinese American community to translate the poems and by 1982, 135 poems had been translated. These appeared in Him Mark Lai, Judy Yung and Genny Lim's seminal text, *Island, Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910–1940*. At the same time, a community-led movement fought for the preservation of Angel Island and the immigration station stands to this day, visited by school children of all ages, by contemporary poets and artists, by historians, by everyday visitors, and often by the descendants of the Chinese Americans incarcerated in the centre itself, the inheritors of the defiant archive written into the walls.

In 2022 the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation released a new digital exhibition featuring the poetry called *Voices of Resilience: An Online Exhibition Celebrating the Immigration Station's Historic Poetry and Poems Submitted by the Public*, curated by Russell Nauman and Edward Tepporn. The exhibition is highly innovative because it demonstrates the ways in which the Angel Island poems have travelled beyond the walls of the centre, and are now embedded in the lives of the wider community: 'Featuring 22 poems written by former detainees, discover how the historic poetry of Angel Island has inspired advocates, scholars, musicians, and artists from 1970 to today'. Poignantly, members of the public were invited to submit poetry about their experience of isolation during the COVID lockdown and these

poems can be read in a section of the exhibition called 'COVID Poetry'. Some of the other sections of the exhibition are called Family Ties, Fighting Fear Through Poetry, Collaborative Poetry, Music from Poetry and Immigrant Poetry. This is a remarkable achievement. The curators have intentionally allowed the poems to breathe, treating them less as historical artefacts and more as a testament to shared suffering across racial, linguistic and temporal divides.

Yui Poon Ng reads many of the original poems in their original Toishanese Dialect. I found his recitation of 'My Wife's Admonishment' by 'Lee' who arrived in 1911 especially moving. Calvin Ong was detained along with his mother and brother on Angel Island at the age of 10, in 1937, before being deported back to China, and then finally returning and settling in the US in 1949. He is recorded reading poetry he wrote about his time in detention on Angel Island. Susie Oy Lum Fong left her home in Antang Village, Guangdong, China, in 1935 to marry Fong Mon Dai. She was detained at Angel Island for three months. Fifty years later, at the age of 75, she wrote a poem for her children to commemorate her stay there – this poem was also included in the exhibition. Chen Yi, a Chinese American composer, was inspired by the Angel Island poems to write Angel Island Passages for the San Francisco Girls Chorus. Children from a local elementary school wrote their own poems similarly inspired by the older poems: 'The One. Very confident, even though shy anonymous, energetic'. I loved Tamar Ashdot's poem 'How to Self Isolate': 'shell 800 pistachios. caramelize 24 sticks of butter with 72 cups of sugar, plant 50 seeds and nurture 15 sprouts, dance together and make love on the floor, cry as the ceiling changes colors'.

Voices of Resilience takes an unusual, bold approach to all this, and sometimes the format feels chaotic and overwhelming. But I think this was the only way – for the older poems to speak to the newer poems, they needed to be free of too much historical analysis and context and framing. All poems are presented as equal, so that the themes of the older poems (loneliness, despair, anger, isolation, pain, hope, love, determination) flow seamlessly into the newer poems, a clear assertion of common humanity in dehumanising times.



Industrial Craft in Australia: Oral Histories of Creativity and Survival, Jesse Adams Stein

Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. 263 pages. €99.99 (hardback). ISBN: 9783030872434.

REVIEWED BY SUSAN LUCKMAN,
Products and Places Research Centre (CP3), University of South Australia

Industrial Craft in Australia is the latest book-length study from design historian Jesse Adams Stein, a leading international scholar of industrial craft and manufacturing workers and their personal and professional experiences of the impacts of de-industrialisation. The book richly presents the reflective stories of engineering patternmakers and industrial modelmakers over the last half a century or so, as this 'king of trades' highly skilled vocation came to be particularly impacted

by offshoring, the decline of manufacturing in Australia and the arrival of digital technologies. Consequently, we see the resulting de-skilling and demoralising loss of respect that came with these larger industrial and economic shifts, and the various re-empowering ways those in the industry chose to respond to change.

As with much of Stein's work, the stories informing the analysis presented in this book arise out of the conduct of rich and deep oral history interviews, often followed up by subsequent discussion and ongoing contact with research participants. In this case, 12 patternmakers (both retired and still practising) and business owners were involved in the funded 'Reshaping Australian Manufacturing Oral History Project' which collected these histories for the National Library of Australia's Oral History and Folklore Collection. In introducing her approach to employing this method in Chapter 2, Stein offers valuable insights into the need for self-awareness around class and gender in particular, as well as attention to the longer and at times overly romantic relationship between working-class lives and oral history.

The book's Chapter 3 opens with a personal story of value that speaks of both beginnings and ends. Threatened by the deadly Ash Wednesday fires which hit south-eastern Australia in 1983, in order to survive Bryan Poynton and his family joined so many others from the seaside town of Aireys Inlet in evacuating to the beach and spending the night sheltering in the water. His family (and cat) survived, as did the toolbox he had made over 30 years previously as a commencing apprentice which he had been able to load at the last minute onto someone's car. Alas their house and all their other possessions were lost. That his toolbox was the material item he most cherished and wished to hold onto becomes a springboard for the book's opening analytical chapter on the significance of modelmaking apprenticeships as a site of induction into the profession. While not formalised, making your own toolbox and then your own tools to put in it, was a key way in which young patternmakers learnt and refined their tradecraft. This process also then introduces us to the larger cultural practice within patternmaking of 'foreigners', a de Certeauian tactic of using shop time and materials, usually offcuts, for personal projects, albeit ones often linked to and enabling work. All this speaks to a workplace prior to de-industrialising and the arrival of digital tools, where autonomy and (male) friendship furnished industrial

craftspeople with a sense of self marked by respect. A workplace where they had some degree of status as skilled tradespeople. In Chapter 4 we are brought further into the world of skilled industrial craft, its values and vital but largely unrecognised mediating role between design and production.

Chapter 5 ramps up the book's necessary narrative arc of skilled patternmaking as an industry under threat on multiple fronts, including from the arrival of new digital tools, especially CNC machine milling or cutting, which most research participants felt reduced them to finishers not makers. The experiences of some of the few female patternmakers is the focus of Chapter 6. Chapter 7 sees a focus on the creative pursuits of both former and current patternmakers, foregrounding their capacity for skilled and original work, albeit often in response to a loss of skilled work in the trades sector.

Moving beyond the political and policy debates around the value of Australian manufacturing that have been renewed by the global supply chain impacts of COVID-19, climate crisis, and increasing geo-political instability, into the real, on-the-ground world of industries in decline and skills at risk, what emerges most strongly through these stories is the pride and meaning attached to being a skilled trades worker experienced by the research participants. Someone able to take an idea on paper and turn it into a fully realised and precise three-dimensional object able to, in turn, be the starting point model for the manufacturing of hundreds if not thousands or millions more objects. The loss of the valued status of such work, and with it essential skills required for both contemporary and future production, is felt palpably through this book and the rich insider perspective it offers us into this both lost and evolving world.