1. *Dreams in the Shadows* presents fragments of the stories Vietnamese-Australians tell about their lives in Vietnam and Australia, and their interactions with Vietnamese and Australians. It weaves these intricate and multilayered accounts into an equally complex story of migration, displacement, place, space and identity, and in doing so attempts to provide readers with an insight into, as the text on the back cover states, 'what it is like to be a refugee in a country that has a completely different culture from your own.' In those terms, the book is a triumph. Upon finishing it I had not only learnt something about how, in sociological terms, an immigrant community remembers the past and recreates itself in a new and sometimes hostile environment, but I also felt a mix of joy and sorrow as I recalled and pondered the people's lives Thomas so sensitively and powerfully represents.

2. In each chapter except the first, in which Vietnamese migration to Australia is contextualised, the stories of the lives of Vietnamese-Australians are woven into the author's stories: stories about Vietnamese bodies; their homes; the spaces they inhabit in a new community; the relationships between urban space, the state and Vietnamese cultural difference; the loneliness of the city and its suburbs; the change in status necessitated by the move from Vietnam to Australia; Vietnamese festivals, in particular Tet; the role of Vietnamese women in a community undergoing transformation; and ties to a homeland. Vietnamese-Australian voices speak to us on nearly every page. They are the voices of us all. There are voices of anger, of fear, of triumph, of hope. But there are also argumentative voices, contradictory and fractious, and ideas of an homogenous Vietnamese-Australian community evaporate in the face of tensions based in class, gender, birthplace, expectations and a myriad of other differences. There is a community, but like all communities it exists only in the language that calls it forth.

3. For the Vietnamese-Australian women Thomas knew, for example, the language that calls forth identity, place and displacement quivers between fluid memories of what it meant to be a woman in Vietnam, a Confucian-derived hierarchical family structure, and a perception of what it is to be a woman and/or man in Australia. Vietnamese men were thus perceived by their mothers, wives, daughters and sisters as wanting to recreate the power relations they had enjoyed in Vietnam. However, due to economic, political and social reasons they were unable to do so, and thus women now believed they had bargaining power to institute changes in gender relations within the family (p. 156). Nevertheless, Vietnamese women also upheld traditional values from their former lives - of women's strength due to their endurance of hardship.

4. As one would expect, many of the people Thomas talked to developed their sense of place and identity in the context of their understanding of Australia. Stories of Vietnamese-Australian life are often opposed to stories of Australian life. Australians are perceived as physically big, individualistic and uninterested in family life, as opposed to Vietnamese people who see themselves as small and family oriented. For the most part Thomas allows these voices to be heard without judging or evaluating. However, there are times when the author seems to represent Australia in ways similar to some of her informants. These moments are rare, but they point to a troubling characteristic in sociological/anthropological story telling.
5. The characteristic to which I refer is perhaps more noticeable in an ethnography as expansive and nuanced as this, where Vietnamese-Australian's lives are portrayed as sufficiently complex to prevent any over-simplified identification of the 'Vietnamese'. I will be surprised, for instance, if any reader of this book can ever again use the term 'Vietnamese-Australian' without the thought intruding that such terminology is limiting and narrow. And rightly so. Yet pricking me at various places in the book was the feeling that the terms 'Australian' and 'Australia' could well do with a little more problematising of the sort that so rightly pervades the author's portrayal of Vietnamese-Australian lives. On the one hand, this ethnography burrows into and intimately recreates the lives of its informants. On the other hand it on occasion portrays Australia in terms that perhaps fail to take account of interesting difference within a community we call Australian - which, after all, includes people born in Vietnam.

6. This is an observation about much that is written on the relations between Australia and Asia, and is not specific to this book. If our stories about ourselves and each other are to genuinely embrace the complexity of human life, then perhaps we must embrace it in all its diversity. Vietnamese-Australian lives are presented here with such an intense commitment to showing their intricate linkages, fractures and ambiguity that a failure to likewise portray 'Australian' lives is a deficiency.

7. Nevertheless, like me I am sure many readers will find much to celebrate and contemplate in Dreams in the Shadows. I applaud Mandy Thomas and the Research Centre in Intercommunal Studies at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean - from which this work arose - for their passion for and commitment to telling the story of transition in such an insightful manner.