

# Unpolished Gem

Bruce Elder, reviewer  
September 21, 2006

**A rare bicultural view on Australian multiculturalism.**

**Author**

Alice Pung

**Genre**

Autobiography

**Publisher**

Black Inc

**Pages**

282

**RRP**

\$24.95

Alice Pung, known to her Chinese-Cambodian family as Agheare, is a child of refugees who, having grown up in Australia, can offer a rare bicultural vantage point on Australian multiculturalism.

Pung shifts effortlessly from the world of her family (where her mother speaks little English, her father becomes entrepreneurial and takes up a Retrovision franchise and her Cambodian-Chinese culture remains intact) to the world of school and university where her values are those of a typically Australian kid.

It is a story told with artless simplicity and without a hint of recrimination or attempted analysis, which highlights the problems of migrants who try to find some kind of natural balance between the life they have left and the new life they are eager to embrace.

Throughout are many small cultural indicators leaving the reader to marvel at the resilience of Agheare who, with pain and humour, makes the transition, goes to university, falls in love, and becomes a lawyer and writer.



Author Alice Pung tells her story with artless simplicity in *Unpolished Gem*.

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