

Farida Karodia. *Coming Home and Other Stories*. African Writers Series. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1988) 185 pp., \$7.50 paper.

In *Coming Home and Other Stories*, Farida Karodia, South African born author now residing in Canada, has written a classic text which I recommend for use in African, contemporary, world literature, and women's studies courses.

Set in South Africa, these stories all depict the results of colonial and postcolonial rule on the indigenous African population: disruption, uprooting, dislocation, joblessness, homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, delinquency, crime, poverty, starvation and death—as in “The Necklace,” “Cardboard Mansions,” “iGoldie” [sic], and “Ntombi.” Moreover, Karodia believes, all lives, even those of the oppressors, are ultimately implicated tragically in the vicious circles which they themselves created, as in “Coming Home,” the title story.

Members of the white elite occasionally turn against their own system, as in “Something in the Air” and the final story, “Seeds of Discontent,” which is Karodia's message to whites. The penultimate story, “The World According to Mrs. Angela Ramsbotham” (pun intended by the author), is Karodia's message for blacks as well as for whites. By means of a symbolic chain of events, Karodia summarizes the historical situation of colonial and postcolonial rule in Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia), as well as predicts its future. The author does this by means of Mrs. Ramsbotham, her inherited antique bedspread (her traditions), and Dynamite Nkala, her “houseboy,” whom she insists on calling Daniel—aptly, for he symbolizes African Daniel in the [English] lion's den. One fateful day, the Englishwoman imposes on her servant a plethora of humiliating and entirely gratuitous instructions (all delivered with the same insufferable, obdurate conviction of Daniel's inherent incapacity). Immediately prior to a dinner party, she lectures him on how to properly lay out her “magnificent and very valuable” bedspread. During the party, she complains at great length about him before firing him for incompetence—but not before boasting at equally great length about her bedspread: “Oh, it's been in my family for almost a century now. The linen is handwoven, edged with a six-inch lace border, all hand-tatted of course by one of my ancestors. The centre piece is a delightful garden study in *petit point*, hand-stitched by Lady Carlisle.”

On his part, Daniel reflects that

his life had changed little since Independence. No money. No jobs. Like the majority of Blacks, his expectations had been dashed. For years prior to Independence people at the beer-hall had talked about how they would prosper under a multi-racial government. Now they had independence but no prosperity. . . . It was hard to stomach the inequity. On the one hand there were the [black] politicians, on the other there were white people, and they [most other blacks] were caught in the middle.

He returns to the house while the party is still in progress, to the master [sic] "bedroom where the bedspread was perfectly aligned. Not a single crease or wrinkle marred the appearance of this exquisite piece of work." Here Daniel pulls "down his trousers and squatted on the bed; straddling the exquisite panel stitched by Lady Carlisle, he defecated" before "he departed."

— Phillipa Kafka
Kean College of New Jersey

Shirley Goek-Lin Lim, Mayumi Tsutakawa and Margarita Donnelly, eds. *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology*. (Corvallis, OR: Calyx Books, 1989) 290 pp., \$29.95; \$16.95 paper.

The Forbidden Stitch appears to be one of the better anthologies of the work of Asian American women writers. The editors have worked assiduously to make it comprehensive. It is an exceptionally fine selection of prose, poetry, essays, and reviews. In an introduction it is stressed that the collection underlines the differences among the writers, correcting the error of too many critics who homogenize the term "Asian American women." The writers lack a common history. "The thread they form is 'multi-colored' and 'many layered.'" "The voices are plural."

There are many writers of distinction whose work appears here. Among them are: Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge, Diana Chang, Jessica Hagedorn, Nellie Wong, and Merle Woo. Important is the fact that much work by many new writers is included. Although the anthology edited by Joseph Bruchac, *Breaking Silence*, is praiseworthy, this work goes one step beyond in its comprehensiveness.

— Cortland Auser
Yorktown Heights, NY

Bienvenido L. Lumbera. *Tagalog Poetry: 1570-1898*. (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1986) 267 pp., \$11.75 paper.

Bienvenido Lumbera, in his Preface to this survey of Tagalog poetry, apologizes for the shortcomings of his book. Originally written twenty years ago as a doctoral dissertation, it does not take into account new information on Tagalog poetry and its discussion of precolonial poetry does not include new data on the oral poetry of contemporary Filipino groups. "I have bailed myself out," say Lumbera, "by persuading myself that many scholarly sins could be forgiven under the rubric of 'pioneering.'" And indeed these