

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
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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

omissions can be forgiven for what the reader gains in return is a pioneering study describing and analyzing the development of Tagalog poetry.

Lumbera begins with a discussion of the riddles, proverbs, and short poems of the precolonial period. In his analysis of these he notes the use of heptasyllabic lines, assonantal rhyme, and metaphor, elements which, he notes, are missing or awkwardly handled in the later Tagalog poetry of the Spanish missionaries. Their poems, which at one point he describes “charitably” as “wretched,” rely heavily on the Spanish rules of versification, and demonstrate a lack of knowledge of indigenous measures and rhythms. These early missionary poets do, however, receive credit from Lumbera for their work in recording the Tagalog language in a syllabary that was much clearer than the existing, indigenous one.

Lumbera shows that later Tagalog poems by Filipinos were influenced heavily by these colonizers and their literature. In the nineteenth century, greater access to formal education led to the advent of a “refined” poetry meant to reflect the erudition and urbanity of the poet. Rather than reflecting the Filipino culture and landscape, these affected poems look to Europe, specifically to Spanish, Greek, and Roman themes. The one high point of this period is the work of Francisco Baltazar.

Baltazar wrote romantic poems, farces, comedias, and plays which, although obviously drawing upon European themes, often reflect the physical, social, and political landscape of the Philippines. His best known work, “Florante at Laura,” considered the epitome of Tagalog courtly love poetry, is set in an Albania whose forests suspiciously resemble the tropical forests of the Philippines. “Florante at Laura” has also been interpreted as an attack on the Spanish colonial government, a subtle attack which was followed by more strident poems.

The last chapter of the book contains excerpts from the revolutionary poems of the late nineteenth century, specifically Hermenegildo Flores and Marcelo H. del Pilar’s “Hibik nang Filipinas sa Inang España” (Filipinas’ Cry for Help to Mother Spain) and “Sagot nang España” (Reply of Spain), and Andres Bonifacio’s “Katapusang Hibik ng Pilipinas” (The Last Cry of Filipinas), an angry and bitter poem which effectively notified Spain that the Philippines was severing ties.

Bienvenido Lumbera’s study of Tagalog poetry is valuable not only as an analysis of the various forms of Tagalog poetry, but also as a historical survey which attempts to link the poetry of various periods to their social, political and cultural milieu. In translating the Tagalog works into English, he faces the common problem of translating precisely while remaining true to the shape and style of the original text. The translations Lumbera provides are quite good and helpful even for a Tagalog reader who may have difficulty with the archaic words and spellings found in the older poems and riddles. A valuable accompaniment to the text is a sizeable appendix containing selected poems and play excerpts in Tagalog with an English translation. Any “scholarly sins” that Lumbera may have

committed can certainly be “forgiven under the rubric of ‘pioneering,’” and no apology is necessary.

— Michelle Cruz Skinner
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Miriam Makeba and James Hall. *Makeba: My Story*. (New York: New American Library, 1987) 249 pp., \$18.95.

Like much of her music, Miriam Makeba's autobiography is both personal and political. As it details the story of a young girl's coming of age and search for identity, it simultaneously records the history of a country struggling for independence. In the prologue, Makeba compares herself to a South African bird soaring above the horror of apartheid (apartheid) which was instituted in 1947. As she recounts the details of war and injustice in direct, understated, idiom-filled prose, and as she intertwines details of ancient customs with the realities of modern technology, Makeba suggests that music best expresses the tragic subject of the inner exile of the South African people.

Makeba is an exiled political dissident who sees little or no distinction between herself and her beloved country. Although she was denied a sense of history until she was past childhood, Makeba provides a readable anthropological and historical overview of the South African situation. She records the changes undergone by herself and by Africa since her birth in 1932, and she provides the reader with a variety of terms with which to explain religious and social customs. For example, it is the custom for children's African names to comment on events surrounding their births. Since both mother and baby almost died during Miriam's birth, she is called Uzenzile (Zenzi), or one who does not learn from her mistakes. She is given the English name, Miriam, when she begins to earn her living through the magic of music.

The details of Makeba's early life are paralleled with descriptions of African history in a poetic style which interprets idioms and translates vocabulary from the rich, yet oppressed, South African culture. Her story reflects the never-ending attempt to escape the prejudice and injustice which the South African people endure. As she catalogs her personal accomplishments, Makeba states that she speaks for all of her people. She, and they, have overcome terrific obstacles through hope, determination, and song.

Makeba's musical ability afforded her opportunities denied to most Africans. At an early age, Makeba pledged to use her gift of song to help her people, and she has employed her unique talent to meet and to influence some of the most important and powerful men and women of our time. In 1986 she won the Dag Hammarskjold Peace Prize, one of her most cherished honors.