

humor and insight. Another standout is "Mosquitoes in the Main Room," a short prose piece by Meena Alexander based on the gang rape of a woman at a police station in Hyderabad in 1978. "My Mother's Purple Dress," by Evelyn Lee and Gloria Oberst, through oral history and interviews, pieces together the shattered psyche of a Vietnamese refugee; "War Story," by Elaine H. Kim, is a poignant account of her experience during the little-remembered Korean War; and "Makapuu Bay" is Wakako Yamauchi's gentle story of passion, choices, and separation by war, geography, and time. The editors' purpose, above all, was to refute the passive-submissive stereotype: "This anthology shows that we are not afraid to rock the boat. Making waves. This is what Asian American women have done and will continue to do." One thought-provoking suggestion is that the immigrants to America were the more adventurous women, those willing to take risks, to leave the known for the unknown, those desiring travel and excitement, therefore more adaptable to change and a new environment. Grounded in this theory, we could view Asian American women as a group pre-selected for immigration and as forgers of social change. These women did experience greater freedom in America, sometimes to the chagrin of parents and husbands. *Making Waves* eloquently documents the stories of their changes.

— Ann Rayson
University of Hawaii

Doris Jean Austin. *After the Garden*. (New York: New American Library, 1987) 324 pp., \$7.95 paper.

Doris Jean Austin's novel *After the Garden* unites the tragic themes of patricide and familial fury with the contemporary themes of class struggle within the black community of post-World War II America. At the center of this family saga is Elzina Tompkins, a beautiful young black woman who comes of age in the 1940s urban North. Her grandmother, Rosalie Tompkins, is a powerfully drawn figure whom Austin uses as one side of the equation to show the values of a black woman of some means, a woman who seeks to keep her granddaughter "in the garden." The wayward Jesse James, one of Truselle James' many illegitimate children, provides the other side of the equation in Elzina's struggle to grow up. The sexual attraction she feels for Jesse is the very thing Rosalie has feared. Most of the novel details the married life of Elzina and Jesse, life "after the garden."

Austin's portrayal of the class struggle within the black community is effectively handled as the reader witnesses Rosalie's values: strong religious faith, education and decorum, a life of the mind and the spirit. She tries to keep Elzina's beauty hidden behind glasses and frumpy clothes, because she fears that Elzina's sexual initiation will be her undoing. The experience of the body will turn Elzina away from the life that Rosalie has

dreamed for her granddaughter. Jesse James is a threat to that dream, not only because of his strong sex appeal, but also because he represents the social class that Rosalie sees as markedly inferior to her own. In Rosalie's eyes, Jesse does not aspire to anything; he will settle for pumping gas during the day and drinking and gambling at his mother's house at night. Austin does not let Rosalie's class consciousness dominate the novel, however. The love that Truselle has for her children and grandchildren rivals Rosalie's love for Elzina. There is a vitality in Truselle's house that provides an alternative to the quiet, decorous life Rosalie and Elzina live.

Rosalie's values become embedded in Elzina's consciousness, however, despite the fact that Elzina goes against Rosalie in marrying Jesse. One can hear Rosalie's voice whispering in Elzina's ear even after Rosalie has died, undermining the faith Elzina has in her husband. Austin poignantly treats the failure of Elzina's belief in her husband, and it is in the doomed relationship between Elzina and Jesse that the novel reaches tragic dimensions. Jesse is the tragic victim who cannot see a way out of his life under Rosalie's critical eye; he unwittingly involves himself in a robbery and goes to prison. He, too, must leave "the garden," for he will never overcome the bitterness against his wife and her relatively affluent grandmother, who let him go to prison rather than act on his behalf. The tragedy escalates with the birth and rearing of their son Charles, resolving itself in patricide, madness, and despair. Austin, like so many other contemporary African American women writers, ends the novel not with fracture but with reconciliation. Austin adds her powerful voice and perspective to the already impressive body of African American literature.

— Linda Wells
Boston University

Mariano Azuela. *The Underdogs*. Translated by E. Munguia, Jr. (New York: New American Library, 1963) xi, 149 pp., \$3.95 paper.

The Underdogs (Los De Abajo) is a classic novel of the Mexican Revolution. The foreword briefly covers Mexican history, from Spanish Conquest to Independence to Revolution. Its purpose is to focus upon the main sociopolitical and economic problems of the Mexican Revolution.

The story line revolves around a Mexican Indian, Demetrio Macias, who joins the revolution, not because of idealism, but out of the need to protect his family from the rape and pillaging terror of the soldiers. Demetrio changes from a peace-loving, poor, illiterate peasant to a hard-core fighter. His courage in the heat of battle earns him a generalship in Pancho Villa's northern army.

Moreover, throughout the novel there is a strong underlying theme depicting a conflict between two different value systems. On the one hand,