

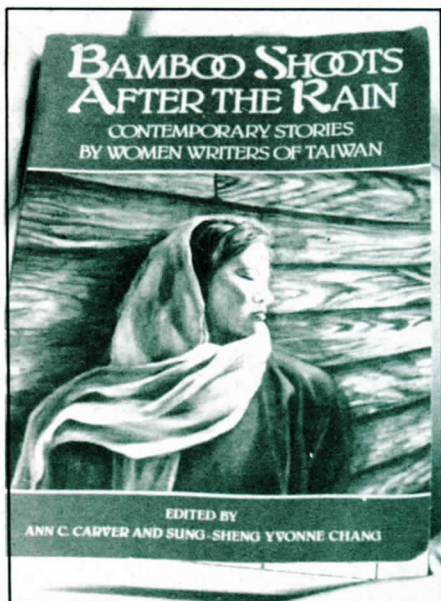
BOOK REVIEWS

Two important issues raised in the discussions were sustainable development and "consumerism". Sustaining development, according to the environmentalists, would mean accepting that the world is finite and thus, development should consider this constraint. Merely depending on national income as a measure of economic well-being is myopic. The fixation with economic growth without looking into the core of an economy's resource base is a prescription for disaster. While production growth should reach infinity, resources are finite and therein lies the contradiction.

On the other hand, the economists argued that the exploitation of natural resources is imperative for economic growth. One should not prevent the growth of incomes. This same growth-centered development paradigms complements the rising "consumerism", an attitude promoted in the present world economic order. In this regard, the views of environmentalists and economists regarding the role of advertisements also differ from each other. To many of the economists, advertisements only influence consumers in as much as they are informed of the possible. To the environmentalists, advertisements imbibe a quality of life and therefore, heightens the sale of products through a conscious creation of demand for these products.

To weave these concerns raised in the Economists and Environmentalists with the basic environmental problems that confront Third World Countries is necessary. As the breadth of proposals which have been forwarded by the world's premiere economists provide compelling insight, the dynamics of the environmental problem in Third World Countries needs to be considered. Tax policies on pollution is widely recommended. When applying this to the Third World Situation, the effect becomes distraught and taxes on pollution may only imply more costs to the poor. On the other hand, for government to properly regulate polluting activities and to invest in technological advance towards less environmental hazards would mean that government should be willing to channel more of its budget for environmental protection. With basically cash strapped governments the environment is left to be exploited. Moreover, the fact is that developed countries relegate polluting activities to developing countries.

The roundtable discussions and interviews conducted by Clara Ravaioli with premier economists and environmentalists has bridged the large gap between mainstream economic theorizing and environmentalism. On this note, Economists on the Environment should be treated as an enlightening introduction towards further reflections.▲



Bamboo Shoots After the Rain **Contemporary Stories by Women Writers of Taiwan**

reviewed by Tess Raposas

edited by Ann C. Carver and Sung-Sheng Yvonne Chang
The Feminist Press at the City University of New
York, 311 East 94 Street, New York, N.Y. 10128 1990

"*Bamboo Shoots After the Rain*" reflects much of the post war cultural-evolution of Taiwan. Edited by Ann C. Carver and Sung-Sheng Yvonne Chang, the title suggests birth, and new life. Its depiction of the travails, aspirations and persuasions of Chinese women from Taiwan is a welcome introduction to their everyday situation and literary life.

The collection also managed to provide the reader a strong sense of history by covering the works of three generations of women writers—the first generation of the 1950s - 60s, middle generation of the 1960s, and the younger generation of the 1970s,—and in the process, highlighting the value systems in each. Carver's

essay, "Can One Read Cross-Culturally?" and Chang's critical introduction of the works are by themselves illuminating. Chang provided the background by which these works were produced but also outlined the specificities of each generation. Also useful are the writers' personal introductions via the biographical headnotes in each of the works.

The writings of the older generation who are described as "largely privatistic, non-subversive and uses idyllic lyricism and sentimental structure of feeling" comprise descriptive short stories portraying the

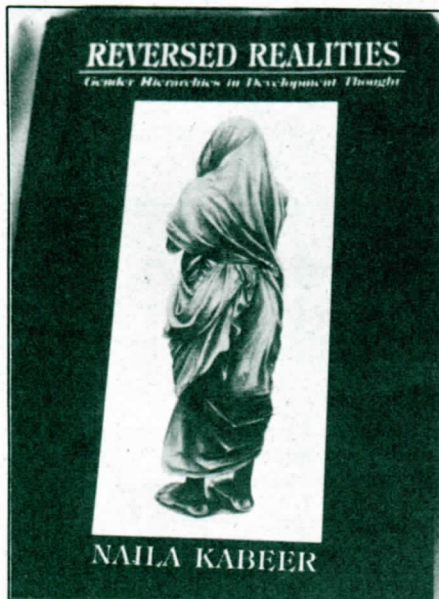
BOOK REVIEWS

status of the Chinese women in Taiwan. "The Candle" by Lin Hai-Yin indicts the feudal Chinese family system through its portrayal of the wasted years of the mistress of a Mandarin family who retreats from life after her husband takes a concubine. P'an Jen-mu's "A Pair of Socks With Love" is about an upper class Chinese family living through the revolutions of China affirms the shared humanity of oppressed and privileged.

The writers of the mid 1960s use wide-ranging themes which reflect their generation's quest for challenging boundaries. "A Woman Like Me" by Hsi Hsi, is a story of a woman cosmetician caught-up between her romantic passion and profession. This piece comes out strongly in an unusually skillful piece.

Set in the time of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, "Chairman Mao is a Rotten Egg" by Ch'en Jo-hsi, revolves around a child who's playful remark about the "great Helmsman" gets her and her family into trouble. Oppression remains in revolutionary China, and this is the unequivocal statement of this story published a year after Mao's death.

Stories by the younger generation attempted to raise gender issues and concerns, although the topics--women-bonding, singlehood, old age, and teen-age suicide--are still limited. In "The Mulberry Sea" by Yuan Ch'ung-ch'ung, two very different women--the willful Yang Ch'iang and the traditional Mrs. Lu--with very different lives are shown to share the same fate: the harsh double standard of society. In "Journey to Mount Bliss" by Chiang Hsiao-yun, the lively Sister Chang encounters the cantankerous Mr. Fu, and they each struggle to cope with their twilight years. For Mr. Fu, growing old meant losing a male's central role both in and outside the family. It is the independent and lively Sister Chang who pushes Mr. Fu's character to redefine his life based on his new situation. Significantly, the collection ends with this comic and optimistic look at aging, and at life in modern China.▲



Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought

reviewed by Emma P. Valencia

by Naila Kabeer.
1994. Kali for Women. New Delhi. 346pp.

The book by Kabeer argues that mainstream development thought, largely informed by neoclassical economics with its emphasis on market forces, is inadequate to address the problem of power relations and gender inequality which are the roots of the marginal status of women in development policy and practice. Most development models informing development policy are couched in abstract and apparently gender-neutral concepts (the economy, the GNP, the market, the formal sector, the informal sector, poverty line and so on). On closer analysis it becomes apparent, according to the author, that these supposedly neutral terms are in fact imbued with male bias, presenting a view of the world which obscures and legitimates ill-founded gender asymmetry. These forms of analysis help to disguise and legitimate the gender asymmetries which are embedded within the central concepts of development.

The book advocates the reversal of several aspects of development thought.

First, a reversal in the hierarchy of knowledge that informs development thought. The new development paradigm would start from the vantage point of the most oppressed -- women who are disenfranchised by class, race and nationality -- so that the complexities of subordination can best be grasped and strategies devised for more equitable development. This viewpoint from below can help to realign development paradigms more closely to the real order of things. This is not to signify that only the dispossessed women of the Third World matter, but rather that without a structural transformation of the lives of the poorest and most oppressed sections of all societies, there can be neither development nor equity.

A reversal of allocational priorities is also advocated. If the satisfaction of human need rather than the exercise of market rationality is taken as the criterion of production, then clearly a much more holistic