

Finally the most interesting part of Ramchand's study and the most interesting and unique aspect of West Indian prose fiction lies in the writers' use of dialect. Thus as opposed to those earlier peripheral dialect speakers who are not taken very seriously, we see in Samuel Selvon's *A Brighter Sun* (1952) dialect being used not only by a central, introspective character but by the narrator as well. We see this as well in the work of John Hearner, George Lamming, and V. S. Reid (part of a larger group of West Indians writing in the picaresque tradition). These writers have come to realize the virtues of dialectical expression in its simplicity, directness, grace, and lucidity, and that expression is one way to get to the essence of their society.

One can look at a pluralistic society such as that of the West Indian peoples as merely troubled or troubled but filled with vitality. Those who see it as the latter are also those who show us through their writing that the breach between the vernacular of a society and its literary language is not the true mark of a great literary product. Mark Twain showed all of us this exactly one hundred years ago.

— Faythe Turner
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Glenda Riley. *Women and Indians on the Frontier, 1825-1915*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984) xvi, 336 pp., \$24.95, \$12.95 paper.

This book makes a simple, but important, point and proves it on the basis of painstaking research: pioneer women went to the frontier with a mental baggage of myths and prejudices about themselves and Indians, but while living in the West they changed their self-image as well as their image of the natives, establishing close relationships with them more frequently than men.

Glenda Riley has researched innumerable diaries, journals, memoirs, and daybooks by travelling women, women settlers, and army wives, concentrating on writings by those who did not think of publication and who had no prolonged or professional contact with American Indians, like missionaries or teacher. "The writings of nearly 200 westering men were also employed in this study. As with the women's sources, these male writers ranged from the very literate to those barely so, young to

old, single to married, upper to lower class, and were of diverse racial and ethnic stock" (326).

Rumors and alarms about Indian atrocities created a frontier psychology of constant fear. Between 1840 to 1860, however, there were more Indians killed by frontier people than were whites killed by Indians. The actual contacts and cultural clashes were reported differently by men and women. Since men did not undergo the same degree of change in their view of American Indians as women, the author suggests that the reasons might be found in the changed view that women had of themselves. Their new environment taught them that they were neither weak and helpless physically nor effective as "civilizers" spiritually. At the same time, they had more intimate contact with the natives than men and gradually realized that Indian character was different from one individual and one tribe to another, that violence between tribes as well as between whites and Indians often increased simply because of dwindling resources due to the influx of whites, and that the natives were more likely to steal livestock in order to secure their survival than to scalp whites and abduct their children. While serious violence did occur, for example in Texas, there were areas like Oklahoma where peaceful relations was the rule.

While men seemed "destined" and determined to be the aggressive frontier force, women could afford to employ Indian nurses for their children, to learn from native women about digging roots, using herbs, and treating snake bites, and to attend native celebrations and ceremonies. When they married Indian men, the unions were usually legalized, whereas those between white men and Indian women were often casual liaisons, especially attractive to men if the woman owned land and stock.

The chapter about "The Selective Nature of Frontierwomen's Sympathies" is, in a sense, disappointing because we are promised to learn about continuously negative attitudes of white women toward Orientals, Mexicans, blacks, Mormons, and Panamanian natives, when actually we are told only about the two latter groups. The book has other small flaws. The methods of social history are carried to an extreme, so that we are occasionally overwhelmed with details and quotes from too many sources when we would rather learn about the larger political context, religious background, and economic circumstances. But since the introduction states explicitly that the book is based on those accounts that did not have the "large" perspective of more professional writings, we have to acknowledge that it succeeds on this presupposition. Likewise, if we are missing the Indians' own voices, we have to see the merits of a study from the viewpoint of "white history" only (xvi).

Twenty-five excellent pictures, extensive notes, and an index contribute to the book's value. This is substantial reading for anybody who wants to

learn more about the complex relationship between white women and non-white people.

— Kristin Herzog
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Edward Rivera. *Family Installments: Memories of Growing Up Hispanic*. (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1983) 299 pp., \$5.95 paper.

Puerto Ricans have been writing about their experiences in the mainland for a very long time. At the beginning, the majority of the texts were written in Spanish by Puerto Rican writers residing in this country or by Puerto Rican writers who lived here for periods of time. A careful study of the works published about the life of Puerto Ricans in the mainland shows that they were written in prose.

Among the first generation of Puerto Rican American prose writers, the best known, for the quality and quantity of their published works, are Piri Thomas and Nicholasa Mohr. To the list of better known “new-yorican” writers we add the name of Edward Rivera. *Family Installments: Memories of Growing Up Hispanic* is Rivera’s first attempt to write a long narrative piece. In this novel, Santos Malanguez, the protagonist narrator, is a participant eyewitness who sees well beyond the first person singular and becomes the translator of the Puerto Rican people in North American society. He portrays their joys and sorrows, their dreams and nightmares, their successes and defeats as they struggle in a different linguistic and cultural environment that much of the time is hostile and filled with indifference.

The novel is divided into thirteen chapters, some of which had already been published as short stories. In the first three chapters, through an effective use of the flashback technique, the protagonist-narrator relates experiences of his early childhood in a small town in the southwestern countryside of Puerto Rico. Rivera includes in his narration a very interesting mixture of oral and official history of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean as he prepares the background for the introduction of the genealogy of his autobiographical main character, Santos Malanguez.

In the middle chapters of the novel, as the subtitle *Memories of Growing Up Hispanic* suggests, Rivera narrates the odyssey of this transplanted migrant family to East Harlem’s El Barrio. *Family Installments* portrays the complex cultural conflict that children growing up in