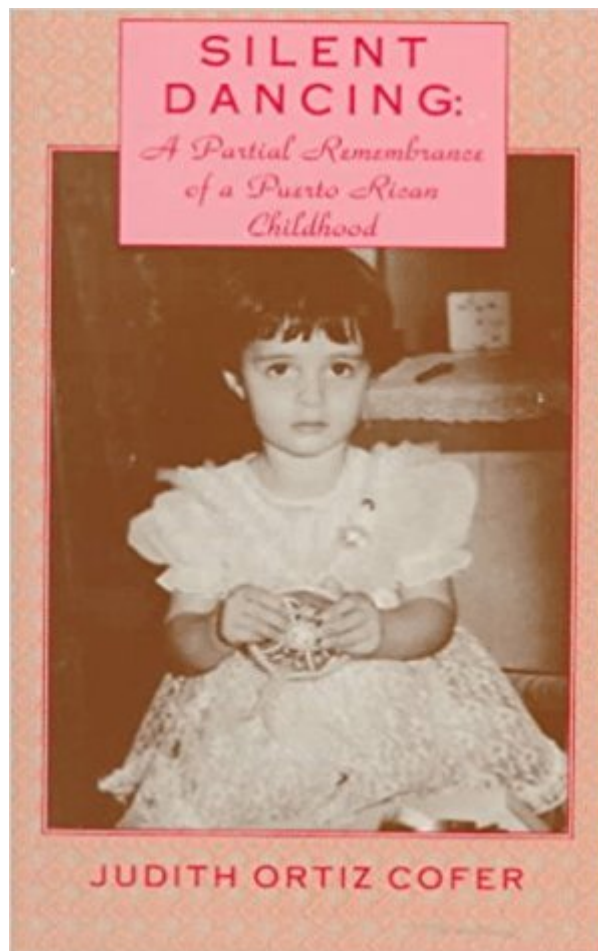




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# Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance Of A Puerto Rican Childhood



## Synopsis

A well-known author's memoir also includes a taste of her poetry.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The essays and poems in Ortiz Cofer's latest collection bridge the gap between autobiography and fiction, between personal remembrance and social commentary. As she shuttles between her village in Puerto Rico and the concrete high-rise "barrio" in Paterson, N.J., where her family lived half of each year, Ortiz Cofer faces the displacement that all military children--her father was in the U.S. Navy--must endure. But her cultural dichotomy is more acute. Indeed, it forms the narrative structure of the book, providing the context for the timeless themes of coming of age. In "The Looking-Glass Shame," she contrasts her mother's implacable ties to island tradition with her own freedom to break them. Yet while America, "Los Nueva Yores," opens up new vistas for the author, it also threatens to eradicate her ancestral foundations, her deepest, most poignant childhood memories. Poet and novelist Ortiz Cofer ( *The Line of the Sun* ) recovers the warp and weft of her experience in stellar stories patterned after oral tradition. Essays appeared previously in the *Georgia Review* and other publications. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"... for young readers, this is a delightful, thoughtful assessment of bicultural, bilingual life..." -- Booklist  
"Judith Ortiz Cofer's talent for story telling was learned at the knee of her grandmother, 'Mama.' In this entertaining and perceptive book, the author's life unfolds through tales set in Mama's room, in Puerto Rican pueblos, and in Paterson, New Jersey apartments. Her father joins

the U.S. Navy, and when his ship is in port in New York City, the family lives in New Jersey; when he is at sea, they move back to Puerto Rico to a life with family and many friends. After Judith starts school, the family spends summers in Puerto Rico and the school year in New Jersey. Life there is very restricted: her father leaves instructions not to mingle with neighbors; he has plans for a better life for his family, certainly one better than the near-poverty conditions of this neighborhood. Judith Cofer's mother takes her husband's words to heart and rarely interacts with her New Jersey acquaintances, leaving Judith to become her mother's voice in dealing with neighbors and shopkeepers while her father is away. Her father, a strong person, takes on much of Judith's responsibility when he is home. This relieves her but also creates confusion about her role in the family. Growing up in two cultures, Judith both identifies with and feels rejected by each. This memoir, comprising essays that can stand alone, also includes some of the author's poems, which further illuminate her experiences and add to our understanding of this child of two worlds. -- For great reviews of books for girls, check out Let's Hear It for the Girls: 375 Great Books for Readers 2-14. --From 500 Great Books by Women, review by Holly Smith

Great read

Nice to have a book that looks at Puerto Rican traditions and cultural ties.

Book was supposed to be new but had writing on several pages!!!

it was a gift and my friend loves it

love this book is so esy to read and transport me to a time when my mother was young. it was a fast service. good shape, no tears or ripped.

Very relatable. Cofer is a great storyteller!

I had to read this book for a course at my college. It is a really interesting way for an autobiography to be written. I really enjoyed the intermittent poetry. This is a book you should read if you are interested in bi-culturalism, or how one deals with living in between two cultures (Puerto Rican and American).

Silent Dancing  
A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood

This book, *Silent Dancing*, is a memoir of a Puerto Rican, Judith Ortiz Cofer's, life as a young child. Judith's grandmother is an important piece in Judith's life. Mama (Judith's name for her Grandmother) could be strict to Judith, but she loved her. Her grandmother was known through out the family by telling storues about a young woman named Maria Sabida. Maria was a poor woman who was called weird for funny, outlandish behavior. From Mama's stories, Maria had a thick and wrinkled old body, but she walked and acted like a little girl. For a living Maria delivered meat pies and other treats to houses. Judith had heard that if you got close to her you could see her swinging a basket with delicious pies, hear her humming a tune that sounded positiley awful, and if you got really close to her, she might smile at you revealing all her yellow teeth in a crooked, sad smile. To Judith, it seemed like a grotesque version of the Little Red Riding Hood. Judith's grandfather, Papa, was a spiritist. He once saw visions of one of his sons, Hernan, being beaten and treated awfully. Mama did not believe him but it was unfortunatly true. Once Hernan was saved from being beaten and tortured, Mama let Papa have all the space and time he needed. When Judith was young, she was made fun of when speaking Spanish and English. When she spoke Spanish people told her that she had an English accent; when she spoke English she had a Spanish accent. Then, one day as Judith came home she was told that a Chilean girl was moving in an apartment above her family's. The Chilean girl's name was Vida. She was tall, thin, and beautiful. Judith admired Vida. Vida looked like a model and wanted to be a movie star someday in Hollywood. Vida did not like her family that much, so she hung out with Judith's family. Vida's past was sad and depressing so she only thought of the future. But then Vida changed Judith. Not on purpose though. It was just that Judith wanted to be everything like Vida. She was always there for Vida when she needed support and assurance. When Judith and Vida walked up the streets to Judith it was a dangerous but exciting game. But then Vida fell in love. Judith was still loyal to her and was used as a cover for Vida so Vida could meet her Neanderhal, muscley man. Vida had shared to Judith all what he had promised her. On day, once Judith had started school again, Vida came to Judith's apartment complaining that her parents had refused to accept her getting married to her Neanderthal, and wonderful man. Judith's father agreed for Vida to stay in their apartment for a while. After a while, Vida announced that they had broken up their engagement and started seeing other men. But that didn't worry Judith's mother. Mother was mad that Vida wore perfume that got all over my clothes, and stank of alcohol when she came back late at night. To mother, smelling unclean terribley rude. But Vida was changing. She no longer spoke of Hollywood, and wore perfume. Judith came home one afternoon to find Vida gone. The last time she ever saw Vida was on a beauty pagent poster. It read, "Vida

wins!" Judith Ortiz Cofer now is remembered for her inspirational book to young people. She has inspired others to write memoirs like her book.

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