

Sandra Cisneros. *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*. (New York: Random House, 1991) 165 pp., \$17.50 paper.

This collection reveals Cisneros as a refreshing writer of a variety of fictional forms. Her work at times may remind readers of Chicana short fiction by Estella Portillo. Cisneros has the distinct ability of writing vividly and imaginatively in her pictorialization of Mexican American life. She creates sketches, short stories, vignettes, and descriptive "essays."

Her personae are as credible as they are various. This is true of the very young Chicana speaking about her chum in "My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn," or the pre-teen in "Eleven," or the narrator of "Mexican Movies." Another story is related by the former lover of Zapata, the Mexican revolutionary. Her sad-glad feelings are told to an older Zapata who has stopped by to see her and has fallen asleep.

"Woman Hollering Creek" is the story which resembles Portillo's "Paris Grown." Both tell of women escaping an oppressive social situation. Her "Little Miracles . . ." is a *tour de force* listing of various letters left near various saints' statues expressing gratitude for what are labeled "Little Miracles."

Cisneros entertains and surprises. Her subject matter may be Chicano, but her writing about the human condition transcends a particular place and people.

— Cortland P. Auser
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Judith Ortiz Cofer. *Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood*. (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1990) 158 pp., \$8.50 paper.

This is a rather loose collection of *cuentos*, or stories, by a person of two very different worlds. In the years of her youth, Judith Ortiz was shuttled between Paterson, New Jersey, and Puerto Rico. Her parents were immersed in the Spanish culture of the Caribbean tropics; but like so many other Puerto Ricans, her father left the island in the 1950s to secure a better life for his family. He joined the US Navy and spent six months of every year at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and the rest of the time at sea. When he was stationed in Brooklyn, he would send for his wife and children to live with him in an apartment outside Paterson. Thus, young Judith spent her childhood years alternately living in a small town on a tropical island and in a large urban area in North America. Her father adjusted to the new culture, but her mother never did.

As would be expected, the author grew up with split loyalties regarding her parents and the different cultural groups in which she lived. These accounts of her exposure and reaction to her experiences make up the entire narrative of *Silent Dancing*. The book is a remembrance that abounds with fascinating tales told by Ortiz Cofer's grandmother whom everyone called Mamá.

In Mamá's casa were several mahogany rocking chairs, acquired at the births