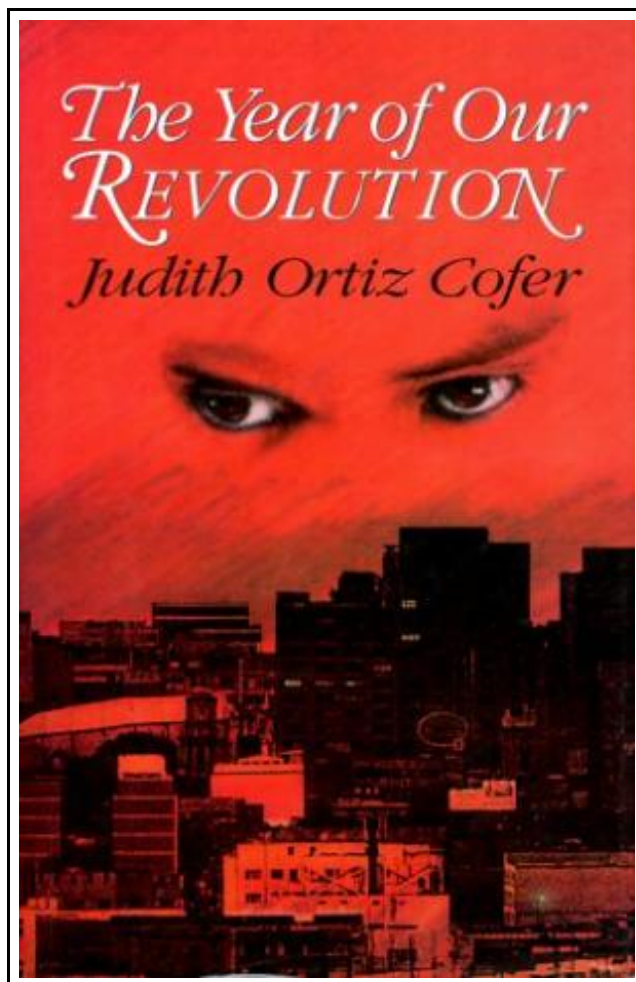


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Arte Publico Press, United States, 1998. Hardback. Book Condition: New. 221 x 145 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book. Fiction. Poetry. Latino/Latina Studies. Young Adult. Returning to the territory covered in *An Island Like You* and *SILENT DANCING*, Cofer further heightens her descriptions of barrio life with a pervasive current of sensuality and rebellion in this volume of poems and stories about growing up during the turbulent 1960s. Most of the stories are described in hindsight by narrator Mary Ellen, who is also known as Maria Elenita (however, readers may have trouble keeping track of the various narrators in the early stories--which are all told through first-person narration but from differing ages and perspectives). Caught between Hispanic and American lifestyles, and eager to break free of traditional Hispanic values, Mary Ellen is strongly attracted to things that are alien to her parents. Readers will likely relate to Mary Ellen's struggle for independence, her idealism and her need for answers, themes that Cofer carries through the entire collection. In *The Meaning of El Amor*, for example, the narrator sneaks into a nightclub where her recently deceased father, the Puerto Rican Romeo, moonlighted to find out why love causes so much suffering. Cofer's lyrical descriptions of how music and the Vietnam War fired Mary Ellen's youthful passions are affecting: When she was deep into a song, Janis [Joplin] became beautiful. Her voice, hoarse and choked with pain, went right through my skin, and I began to understand the meaning of soul, el duende, in American music. Readers in the suggested age range may miss the most rewarding aspects of Cofer's work, but for mature teenagers, there is wisdom aplenty in this radiant collection. Ages 11-up --Publishers Weekly.



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