

Notes on The Changeling by Judith Ortiz Cofer

The narrative poem entitled *The Changeling* by Judith Ortiz Cofer allows the reader to have a glimpse into interactions between a father and a daughter. The speaker in this poem is a young girl as she tells us about a game she made up to gain her father's attention. By transforming herself into a male by putting on her brother's dungarees and a helmet, she was able to have her father put down his reading and capture his attention momentarily. With taking on the persona of Ernesto "Che" Guevara (a Cuban revolutionary leader) and telling stories of make-believe battles and adventures, the speaker challenges the typical role women have in society. While her father was rather amused by her antics, her mother was not. Her mother seemed to have strong feelings concerning the role of women. To her, a woman's place was in the kitchen.

The title of this poem (*The Changeling*) reflects the make-believe world of children and their tendency to role play. The poem is written in free verse. It does not contain rhyme or any particular rhythm. It is written in first person. Certain phrases stand alone, which makes them stand out; i.e., "as myself" (line 28). The mood of this poem is rather sad in that the girl has to pretend to be someone else in order to get her father's attention. There is a sense that the girl feels lonely and almost abandoned by her father. On the other hand, the speaker shows us an impish side to her that is imaginative and playful. There is an undertone in the poem that suggests the speaker wants to branch off and discover/ be a part of things outside of the traditional view of "little girls."