Constructing Home away from Home: Home and Community in Judith Ortiz Cofer's *The Line of the Sun*

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

This thesis examines Puerto Rican American Judith Ortiz Cofer's *The Line of the Sun* (1989) in the light of the concepts of diaspora and home. The aim of this study is to analyze the construction of home away from home taking into account the influence that the original home community in the homeland exerts on the diasporic community portrayed in the novel.

This study acknowledges that constructing home away from home relies on imported gender roles, behavioral codes, religious rituals and other traditions for its constitution, regulation, and maintenance. It also reflects on the challenges posed by the context of the mainland, and the relationship of the diasporic community with the host society. In addition, the study considers the role of private home and home community in the maintenance of the diasporic community.

The study uses the concepts of diaspora elaborated by cultural theorists in order to identify the community of El Building as a diaspora. It also draws on the definitions of home in order to understand home's non-neutral nature, in diaspora and also in the homeland.

The analysis uses William Safran's list for the identification of diaspora to demonstrate how the community of El Building is as a matter of fact a diaspora. In addition, it draws on James Clifford's idea of gendered experience of diaspora to show how men and women experience it differentially.

This study also uses Biddy Martin's and Chandra Tapalde Mohanty's approach to home communities to analyze the home community in Puerto Rico and the diasporic community of El Building in the light of geography, demography, and architecture. The use of these categories show that home communities function in an inclusion/exclusion pattern, of which women take part of by using gossip as a mechanism of regulation.

Finally, women's experience of home and home community in the homeland and in diaspora is explored. Rosa's, Ramona's, and Marisol's experiences are proven to be markedly different. Their experiences show the impossibility of adjustment to a home community, satisfaction with the life in diaspora, and longing for Americanization and avoidance of the Puerto Rican diasporic community respectively.

Avainsanat – Keywords
Diaspora, home, home community, gender, Judith Ortiz Cofer, The Line of the Sun, Puerto Rican Identity

Contents

1. Introduction 1

1.1 Aims and Structure 1

1.2 Judith Ortiz Cofer and *The Line of the Sun* 5

1.3 Novel's Reception and Earlier Studies 8

1.4 Puerto Rican History and Diaspora 14

2. Home Away From Home 18

2.1 Latino and Puerto Rican Writers in the United States 18

2.2 Diaspora, Gendered Experience of Diaspora, and Home 26

3. Diasporic Experience in *The Line of the Sun* 38

3.1 Diasporic Home Community 39

3.2 Remembering Home in the Homeland 53

3.3 New Home in the Homeland 65

3.4 Women's Experiences of Diaspora and Home Away From Home 70

3.4.1 Rosa 71

3.4.2 Ramona and Marisol 75

4. Conclusion 83

Bibliography

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims

Melanie Otto writes in “The Caribbean” that today the most significant diasporic communities living in the United States include populations coming from the islands of Haiti and Puerto Rico. The latter has an intricate relation with the Unites States because of two factors, namely, the island’s political status and the cultural differences between the two places. The island’s current political status as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico[1] means that it is an unincorporated territory with control over internal affairs, while the United States has authority over foreign relations and commerce. Culturally, Puerto Rico differs from the United States in the strong legacy that the Spanish dominion left after its withdrawal from the island at the end of the nineteenth century, after more than four hundred years of control.

Puerto Ricans became American citizens in the first half of the twentieth century, and thus they were, and are, legally able to move between the island and the mainland as they please. The life of Puerto Ricans living on mainland United States and their relationship to mainstream American culture has become a source of interest and a recurrent subject for Puerto Rican diasporic writers. In her first novel *The Line of the Sun* (1989), the Puerto Rican American Judith Ortiz Cofer uses precisely this condition to depict the life of first and second generation members of a Puerto Rican family living in a diasporic community in the United States.

This study of *The Line of the Sun* explores the experience of Puerto Ricans in a diasporic home community in the United States. In doing so, it provides a reading of *The Line of the Sun*, in which the transmigrant experience is related to the challenges that establishing a home away

[1] In Spanish the term used to describe Puerto Rico’s status is *Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico*, and its literal translation is the Associated Free State of Puerto Rico.

from home poses, taking into account the influence that the original home and home community exert on the constitution, regulation, and maintenance of the diasporic community. The approach chosen for this reading of the novel is based on the cultural-theoretical concept of diaspora, and its use in the analysis of literature produced by diasporic writers done by literature scholars. Furthermore, the concept of home plays a significant role in the reading of the novel because it permits the examination of the influence that the private home and the original home community exert on the maintenance of the diasporic community.

The reason not to choose a single theorist's view of diaspora is that with new contributions to the subject, the term has extended from the original conceived diasporas (Jewish and Armenian people) to describe collectivities from different origins that live in postcolonial and transnational contexts, which imply the reconfiguration of global power relationships and global mobility. Furthermore, different theorists, such as William Safran, Avtar Brah, Jopi Nyman, Silvia Schultermandl, and Sebnem Toplu, provide visions that complement each other in their conceptualization of diasporic identity as a site where personal identity is performed through the selection of cultural codes that an individual makes. Thus, diasporic identity is not fixed, but it is a site in which reconfiguration and reconstruction occur as a result of cultural input from more than one culture. In addition, by examining different views it is possible to transcend the idea that all diasporic people live in perpetual dislocation and everlasting trauma. Diasporic experience can also be a site of creation and of possibility for new beginnings. Moreover, for the purpose of this study, it is important to acknowledge the different experiences of men and women in diasporic communities. Gender roles in diasporic communities might be performed based on the traditional tasks prescribed in the original home community, which can be markedly different from those in the new setting.

Additionally, this study reflects on two domains of home, which for the purposes of the analysis are called the private and the communal. The private domain refers to the sphere that in Western societies has been assigned to women, where they are responsible for domestic affairs and childbearing. In this conceptualization, home is regarded as a site of protection and safety; however, this is not always the case for home can sometimes represent an unsafe and a frightening place to escape from. On the other hand, the communal is based on the idea of home community approached by feminist writers Biddy Martin and Chandra Tapalde Mohanty, in which one can read a home community through three lenses, namely geography, demography, and architecture, which can prove that the experience of safety of home is relative and differential for the members of a home community. Furthermore, a home community is a site that promotes the distinctive experience of men and women within the same setting through the reinforcement of gender roles and the encouragement of accepted behavioral codes.

This study claims that the constitution, regulation, and maintenance of the home away from home in Judith Ortiz Cofer's *The Line of the Sun* relies on the influence that the original home community exerts on the diasporic community, as seen in the reliance of the inhabitants of El Building on the imported gender roles, behavioral codes, religious rituals and other traditions. This study also pays attention to the challenges that the context of the new homeland and cultural contact with the host society pose to the diasporic community of El Building. Moreover, the study approaches the various private homes and home communities depicted in the novel. It makes emphasis on the homes that the women have been part of, and the types of homes that they long for. To analyze women's experience of home in the novel, the study centers on the characters of the first and second diasporic generation in Paterson, New Jersey: Ramona and Marisol Santacruz. In addition, Pura Rosa's (i.e., La Cabra's) experience of home community and diaspora is taken into account though it is not located in the same spatial and temporal frame.

The first chapter of the study introduces the author, the novel, its reception, as well as a brief account of the History of Puerto Rico. In section 1.2, Judith Ortiz Cofer's life and work are explored, together with the plot of her first novel *The Line of the Sun.* Section 1.3 discusses the reception of the novel and the academic work it has provoked. Finally, section 1.4 provides historical and political information about Puerto Rico and the formation of the Puerto Rican diaspora in the United States.

Section 2 explores how fiction and theory writers have approached the idea of constructing home away from home. First, part 2.1 gives an account of the themes that Latino and Puerto Rican writers explore in their texts. It also examines briefly the Nuyorican literary movement, and other Puerto Rican diasporic writers. Second, section 2.2 provides the theoretical framework for the analysis. The concepts of home and diaspora are explored, including Safran's list for identification of diasporas, James Clifford's notion of gendered diaspora experience, and Biddy Martin's and Chandra Tapalde Mohanty's approach to home communities.

Section 3 analyzes the diasporic experience in the novel taking into account the home community in Puerto Rico and the diasporic community on the mainland. Section 3.1 proves the diasporic character of El Building. In section 3.2, the analysis demystifies the legendary character attributed to the home community in Puerto Rico. Part 3.3 shows how the traditions of the island home community are reenacted by the inhabitants of El Building in order to maintain the diasporic community, of which women take a major responsibility by using gossip as a mechanism of regulation of the community. Finally, section 3.4 examines the differential experience of home and home community of three female characters in the novel: Rosa, Ramona, and Marisol.

1.2 Judith Ortiz Cofer and *The Line of the Sun*

This section presents Judith Ortiz Cofer's biographical information and personal experiences, which can be seen as having a connection to her fictional work. Judith Ortiz Cofer was born in 1952 in Hormigueros, 183 kilometers southeast of San Juan, Puerto Rico. She moved with her parents to the United States in 1956 when her father joined the navy, and they established in Paterson, New Jersey. While her father was absent from home, her mother would return to the island and Ortiz Cofer would follow. According to the *Georgia Encyclopedia*, Ortiz Cofer spent portions of her childhood travelling between Hormigueros and Paterson. Even though most of her schooling took place in Paterson, she lived for extended periods at her grandmother's house in Puerto Rico and attended the local schools. At the age of fifteen, she moved with her family to Augusta, Georgia, where she received a degree in English from Augusta College (now, Augusta State University), before moving to Florida to receive her MA in English. She became a faculty member of the University of Georgia, where she is now Professor of English and Creative Writing.

Ortiz Cofer's publications include prose, poetry, and essays. *The Line of the Sun* (1989), published by University of Georgia Press, is her first novel; however, it was not her first published work. Previously, *Peregrina*[2] (1986), *Terms of Survival* (1987), and *Reaching for the Mainland* (1987), all poetry collections, were published. The titles of these early publications give a glimpse of the recurrent themes of Ortiz Cofer's work, which include the movement of migrants between the island and the mainland and the straddling of two cultures.

Ortiz Cofer's writing has been greatly influenced by her stays on the island, its landscapes, and the stories of her Puerto Rican grandmother. In an interview with Rafael Ocasio in *Callaloo*, Ortiz Cofer's acknowledges, "[t]he stories I heard from my grandmother became the

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[2] She-Traveller; She-Pilgrim.

basis for my imaginative life" (732). On the other hand, Ortiz Cofer also admits that her work differs substantially from the publications by the Nuyorican movement in the United States. Even though Ortiz Cofer shares the situation of straddling two cultures with the Nuyorican writers, and although she lived for some years close to New York, Ortiz Cofer acknowledges that she belongs to a different generation that grew up elsewhere. In addition, Ortiz Cofer attended Catholic schools, where she "was educated in standard English" (Ocasio 734). Thus, she did not experience the same deprived life conditions that Nuyorican authors did in New York City. In the same interview with Ocasio, Ortiz Cofer states,

> [w]hen I read the work of the Nuyorican poets, I relish it; I teach it, I love it, I am delighted by it, but I can't write like they do. I would hope that if they read my poetry, that they would try to enjoy it, too. Although of a different generation perhaps, I certainly grew up in a different region than they did, but that doesn't make me less Puerto Rican. I have very strong feelings about that. I want my work to be recognized as coming out of the Puerto Rican tradition, even though it sounds different. (734)

The difference of her work when compared to the style of the Nuyorican writers will be made more clear in section 2.1 Latino and Puerto Rican Writers in the United States, where the themes used by Nuyorican writers are explored; these themes include exploitation and marginalization in the United States. As mentioned above, it is relevant to bear in mind that the socio-economic conditions in which Ortiz Cofer grew up were very different from those experienced by Nuyoricans. In fact, in *The Line of the Sun*, the reader finds a family who does not struggle economically in comparison to the rest of the people in their Puerto Rican diasporic community, but who do still share the longing for home and also cherish the island's customs. Therefore, in *The Line of the Sun* it is possible to find many parallels with the author's own life. In a way, it is

a journey back to her childhood through memory to what she saw and heard on her trips to the island, and after her arrival in the United States. After reflecting on Ortiz Cofer's life events, it is possible to identify some similarities between her own biography and the depiction of the Vivente family in the novel, including the significant position of and the respect for the grandmother, the bilingual upbringing, the father's naval career, and the move to Paterson, New Jersey.

The Line of the Sun depicts the life of the Vivente family throughout three generations, and in two different locations: Puerto Rico and the United States. The first part of the book is located in Salud, a word that means health in English, a fictional town in Puerto Rico, where the working-class Vivente family lives. Mamá Cielo cooks and sells lunches for the workers in the cane fields, and Papá Pepe works in the sugar refinery in order to support their three children, Carmelo, Guzmán, and Ramona. Guzmán is the wild child of the family, and his misconduct troubles Mamá Cielo. Therefore, she decides to take Guzmán, at the age of fourteen, to see La Cabra (the She goat) in her spiritual center near Salud in order to give peace to Guzmán's troublesome spirit. Instead of finding a remedy for the problematic child, Guzmán falls in love with Pura Rosa (Pure Rose), La Cabra, who is not only known for her spiritual work, but also as the town's prostitute. Eventually, Pura Rosa is forced to leave town, and Guzmán decides to leave Salud as well. Around the same time, his sister Ramona marries his best friend Rafael, who has joined the navy, and asks her to come with him to the United States.

In the second part of the book, fifteen years have passed since the second generation of the Vivente family migrated to the United States. In this section the reader learns that the narrator of the past stories and the events to come is Marisol, Guzmán's niece. She relates the life and happenings in a tenement building in Paterson, New Jersey, as well as her family life with her brother Gabriel, her mother Ramona, and the intermittent presence of her father, Rafael. In El

Building (El is the definite article "the" in English), Puerto Rican families emulate the life of the island through traditional cooking, decoration of their apartments with bright religious pictures, *Santería* meetings, and gossip.

One day Guzmán arrives at El Building. He has not seen his sister in years and this is his first encounter with his niece and nephew. Guzmán stays in El Building after Rafael leaves for work and promises him to convince Ramona to leave the tenement. The fall of the diasporic community in El Building starts when Guzman is stabbed. Not long after his recovery, a big *Santería* event, in which Ramona participates as an organizer, ends in a fire that burns down El Building. All the members of the family survive, but they lose everything in the disaster. Afterwards, Guzmán returns to the island, and Ramona finally agrees to move with her family to a New Jersey suburb.

As mentioned above, the identification of parallels between the novel's plot and the author's own life is feasible. Thus, it is possible to classify the novel as a semiautobiographical work. In the novel, Marisol's narration of her personal heritage and experiences reflects her individual search for identity between two languages and two cultures. Finally, Marisol claims that she finds an understanding of a life through writing about it in the form of a story; this encounter can be read as another point of convergence between the novel and the author, who believes her "memories are as valid for art as anybody's memories" (Ocasio 732).

1.3 Novel's Reception and Earlier Studies

This section focuses on two aspects subsequent to the publication of the novel, namely, the novel's reception, and the academic studies that have presented various readings of the novel. The discussion of the novel's reception is based on the information found in Ortiz Cofer's own website and the only available newspaper review published in *The New York Times.* The website

acknowledges Ortiz Cofer's achievements in the literary field, while the review praises her first novel as a new and distinctive voice emerging within the Puerto Rican literary production in the United States. On the other hand, the academic studies which the novel has been subject to deal with Puerto Rico's colonial history, transgression, ambiguous identity, romantization of the island and life in diaspora.

The Line of the Sun was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize and "was named a New York Public Library Outstanding Book of the Year" (Ortiz Cofer's website). This recognition brought interest to Cofer's work. In a review in *The New York Times*, Roberto Marquez asserts that Ortiz Cofer's work enlarges the reach of Puerto Rican literature with her woman's perspective and the locations where the plot unravels, Salud and Paterson, New Jersey. Prior to Cofer's book, the literary expression of the plight of the Puerto Rican migrants had been dominated by the male perspective in settings such as the Spanish Harlem, the Bronx or the Lower East Side in New York City. Marquez states that Ortiz Cofer "reveals herself to be a prose writer of evocatively lyrical authority, a novelist of historical compass and sensitivity." Marquez's remark on how Ortiz Cofer's first novel broadens the scope of Puerto Rican literature produced on the mainland is appropriate because her voice without a doubt prioritizes women's experience in locations different from New York. In addition, the first part of the novel is a vivid description of life in a small town, which is certainly powerfully evocative. However, I believe the privileged position of the narrator, in combination with her adolescent age, overshadows the communal experience of diaspora with her own urgent desire for Americanization.

The Line of the Sun has been the subject of several research articles and book chapters. The academic studies examined here include four published texts that approach Ortiz Cofer's novel differently. First, John V. Waldron's "Solving Guzmán's Problem: 'An Other' Narrative of

La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña[3] in Judith Ortiz Cofer's *The Line of the Sun*" explores the concept of the *jíbaro* in the Puerto Rican culture. Second, Maya Socolovsky's "Telling Stories of Transgression: Judith Ortiz Cofer's *The Line of the Sun*" explores the novel through the concepts of transgression and liminality. Third, Jessica Magnani's "Colonial Subjects, Imperial Discourses: Rosario Ferré's *The House on the Lagoon* and Judith Ortiz Cofer's *The Line of the Sun*" concludes that the novel weakens Puerto Rican political identity. Fourth, Lisa Sánchez González's "'I Like to Be in America' [*sic*]: Three Women's Texts," a chapter in her book *Boricua Literature: A Literary History of the Puerto Rican Diaspora*, gives a reading of the novel which shows how the past in the island is romanticized, and Marisol is portrayed as a superior being that does not reconcile with the diasporic community she inhabits.

In "Solving Guzmán's Problem: 'An Other' Narrative of La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña in Judith Ortiz Cofer's *The Line of the Sun*," Waldron explores how the story of the Vivente family "portrays one of the continuing and problematic archetypes of Puerto Rican culture, the jíbaro and his gran familia puertoriqueña" (40). According to the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*, the *jíbaro* in Puerto Rico is a peasant with Spanish ancestry, generally in the mountainous areas of the island, and as Waldron indicates he is an icon of pure blood because "the jíbaro represents a return to the idealized, purified culture of la madre patria,[4] España" (42). Thus, the traditional map in Puerto Rico puts the white *jíbaros* in the center, and the Africans and mixed race people on the coast of the island (43). According to Waldron, Guzmán represents "an unwelcomed reminder that the iconic jíbaro is black" (43) in two ways. First, Guzmán is described in the novel as a "monkey" (6), "curly-headed child" (2), or as having a "fuzzy head" (9). Additionally, Guzmán is associated more than once with the Taínos, the native indigenous

[3] The Great Puerto Rican Family.
[4] Mother country.

people that inhabited Puerto Rico until they were decimated and extinguished during the Spanish colony. Second, by attempting to find a cure for Guzman's troublesome spirit Mamá Cielo "struggle[s] to keep the master narrative of the jíbaro intact" (40). Finally, Waldron concludes that "it is possible to say then that Guzman does not have a problem; the problem is with a culture that seeks to repress and marginalize what it does not wish to include" (43).

In "Telling Stories of Transgression: Judith Ortiz Cofer's *The Line of the Sun*," Socolovsky suggests that "the novel is layered with transgressions, addressing the limits between history and the present moment, the narrative of the US mainland and the island, fiction and autobiography, and between different kinds of narrators" (96). In order to carry out the analysis Socolovsky uses Michel Foucault's concept of transgression, which states the importance of an action that involves a limit. In the article, the author argues this concept is present at three levels in the novel: storytelling, autobiography, and sexual deviance. In the first part, Socolovsky explains the transgression by asserting that "Marisol appears simultaneously to tell the story and to suggest that she cannot tell it. In writing this history, she shows us the limitations of her knowledge, and in crossing over the boundaries and limits of time and place, she reveals the activity of crossing itself" (99). In the second part, Socolovsky associates transgression with the exploration and crossing of limits through the relationship between Ortiz Cofer and the material in the novel. Socolovsky acknowledges that although the novel is not an autobiography, it blurs the boundaries between autobiography and fiction: "Ortiz Cofer's third-person auto-biographical voice thus creates a productive space for the exploration of personal and political island history" (101). Finally, in the third section, Socolovsky suggests how liminality is expressed through various characters in the novel such as Rosa (La Cabra), Carmelo and Guzmán. Socolovsky claims that "Rosa [is], one of the novel's most extreme transgressors" (110) and that "Carmelo's and Guzmán's tabooed desires cannot be integrated into Salud's community, and even before the

boys are exiled from the town, their transgressive sexuality becomes a symptom of the larger and more frightening legacy of a history that the community cannot acknowledge" (108).

In "Colonial Subjects, Imperial Discourses: Rosario Ferré's *The House on the Lagoon* and Judith Ortiz Cofer's *The Line of the Sun*," Magnani argues that Puerto Rico is depicted in Ortiz Cofer's novel as a pastoral space detached from the tough experiences in Paterson, and thus Marisol is unable to picture the island beyond the myth, failing in reconciling "conflicting loyalties to home and homeland" (169). Furthermore, Magnani claims that "the island becomes the past of a present and future imaged largely on the mainland" (170). In addition, Magnani asserts that Marisol, the narrator, has a major responsibility in reproducing "colonial representations of Puerto Rico" (171) and in negating national-political history by using repeatedly binary oppositions to describe her parents and her island; concepts that ultimately represent her characterization of the island and the mainland framed in an imperial discourse: "Ramona as dark, sensual, earthy, spiritual, and exotic and of Rafael as white, disciplined, practical, angelic, and familiar" (171). Moreover, Magnani clams that Marisol's reconstructions of the *barrio* (neighborhood) and island are not free from the idea of cultural purity. The author concludes the article with a critique of Ortiz Cofer's work that implies that her novel constitutes an "apolitic ethnicity" revealed through the characters' imperial discourse interiorization, which results ultimately in a novel that is "marked profoundly by ambivalent, perhaps even damaged, notions of national identity" (178). Magnani's conclusion opposes Socolovsky's interpretation, in which the latter author considers the "novel a productive space for the exploration" of the political history of the island (Socolovsky 101).

In "'I Like to Be in America' [*sic*]: Three Women's Texts," Lisa Sánchez González claims that Judith Ortiz Cofer's novel depicts the concerns of a middle-class protagonist, whose accommodation into American society is traumatic and complicated. Furthermore, there is an

effort to abandon personal and familial heritage that concurrently "represent home and estrangement, belonging and ostracism, love and brutality" (141); to abandon the trauma Marisol uses a "romantic register" in her narration that is a symptom of and an antidote to the discontent she feels towards her cultural heritage. Sánchez González continues by asserting that Marisol rejects as obsolete the "feminine Puerto Rican diaspora" heritage (142) as she feels extraordinary within her own community and better suited to adapt to American values. The rejection of cultural heritage and the character's feeling of superiority is supported by the surrounding characters who are depicted as ignorant, backward or lascivious, and thus cannot surpass "their dysfunctional culture" (142). According to Sanchez Gonzalez, the second part of *The Line of the Sun* is a rendition of Marisol's discontent with her island legacy, and the evidence of the impossibility for any reconciliation between Marisol and her diasporic community.

The previous academic studies of the novel have centered on the interpretation of segregation in colonial Puerto Rico and its reproduction in postcolonial times, the transgressive nature of the story and its characters, and the impossibility of reconciliation with the island's cultural heritage, and thus with the diasporic community. This study uses Socolovsky's notion of transgressor to describe certain characters such as Carmelo and Rosa, which were previously identified as such by Socolovsky, and also Doña Amparo. In addition, the analysis agrees with three of Sánchez González's arguments. First, the author's acknowledgement of the existence of a diasporic community in El Building, which will be discussed in depth in the light of diaspora cultural-theory. Second, Sánchez González's interpretation of Marisol's feelings of superiority in relation to the rest of the inhabitants of El Building. Third, Sánchez González's assertion of Marisol's impossibility to reconcile with the diasporic community, which echoes partially Magnani's argument of "conflicting loyalties to home and homeland" (169). On the other hand, this study suggests that the use of the notion of home in analyzing private and communal homes,

home communities, in the novel makes it possible to explore inclusions and exclusions within the same community, as well as acceptable behavioral codes.

1.4 Puerto Rican History and Diaspora

This section explores briefly Puerto Rican history and the formation of the Puerto Rican diaspora in the United States. It is important to outline Puerto Rico's history as a colony, and afterwards as a Commonwealth to understand the complexity of the Puerto Rican identity. The historic overview here includes the change in colonial powers over the island, and describes briefly the Americanization to which the population of the island was subjected. The second part in this section discusses the movement between the island and the mainland that has characterized Puerto Ricans after they attained American citizenship, which allows them to travel freely back and forth between both places. However, citizenship has also been regarded as an incomplete title due to the second-class citizen treatment that Puerto Ricans have received on the mainland, where they have been considered to be a source of cheap but legal labor.

In the introduction of *Puerto Rico: A Political and Cultural History* (1983), Arturo Carrión questions whether the reader, who is addressed specifically as an American, "understands the Puerto Ricans as a people, as a historical entity, within the varied ethnic and cultural canvas of the Caribbean" (ix). This remark expresses how Puerto Rico, despite being claimed by the United States in 1898, was by no means similar to the territories acquired in previous wars or treaties (136). Long before the United States took control of the island, the Spanish colonizers arrived in it. Christopher Columbus reached Puerto Rico in 1493, and the Spanish command extended until 1898 when the United States took the island under colonial tutelage. Thus, the institutions brought by the Spaniards, including Catholicism and the Spanish language, had enough time to spread throughout the island.

In "Colonialism, Citizenship, and the Making of the Puerto Rican Diaspora: An Introduction," Carmen Teresa Whalen writes that after the Spanish-Cuban-American war in 1898, the United States' search for commercial expansion was finally fulfilled by the acquisition of Puerto Rico (Whalen 5). Therefore, in the same year the status of Puerto Rico changed from "colony," to "dependency" or "unincorporated territory" (Carrión 152). In *Puerto Rico: A Colonial Experiment*, Raymond Carr asserts that Americanization campaigns started in the island because Puerto Ricans "were not in American eyes fit for either self-government or membership Union. The island must first be turned into a prosperous English-speaking community" (281). To achieve this condition an educational policy began; however, by 1964 a report stated, "the number of Puerto Ricans who can be described as bilingual is small" (*Report of the United States – Puerto Rico Commission on the Status of Puerto Rico*, qtd. in Carr 284). Carr considers that the "Americanization has produced an island that is neither a mirror image of America nor an essentially Latin American Caribbean society like the Dominican Republic. Puerto Rico is a cultural hybrid, and its inhabitants victims of an all-pervasive cultural schizophrenia" (290).

In 1917, all Puerto Ricans were declared citizens of the United States, and thus the movement of Puerto Ricans between the island and the mainland increased. According to Whalen, the decision of legally granting Puerto Ricans American citizenship came at an agitated historical moment. On the island, people were dissatisfied with the colonial regime, while the United States needed soldiers for its troops in the First World War. Therefore, granting the citizenship was a strategic action to pacify islanders, and to enlarge the body of troops. Subsequently, and provided that Puerto Ricans could move between the island and the mainland as legal citizens, they became a "source of low-wage workers for jobs in the States" (Whalen 13). Whalen indicates that for Puerto Ricans the attainment of U.S. citizenship did not solve the question of their status in the United States. Therefore, Puerto Ricans were perceived as

"foreigners and people of color" (25). Whalen also specifies that citizenship "was sometimes only a second-class citizenship, in the States as well as in Puerto Rico" (25). During the ensuing years, the mobility between the island and the mainland was kept alive through the recruit of Puerto Rican work force through "private agencies and then through government-sponsored contract labor programs" (26).

According to Whalen, in the postwar years the jobs obtained in urban economies allowed Puerto Ricans to settle and establish social networks, which in turn permitted other Puerto Ricans migrate to cities without a labor contract (33). During the 1970s, migration was slower and many Puerto Ricans living in the mainland returned to the island (35). Whalen adds that during the 1980s and 1990s migration rose again, but it was characterized by "two-way patterns" (35). According to the census information presented by Whalen, in 1950 there were 301,375 Puerto Ricans living in the United States, number that increased to 3,406,178 by the year 2000.

In 1952, Puerto Rico became the *Estado Libre Asociado* or Commonwealth. This meant that Puerto Rico was self-governing under the guidelines of the federal legislation, "while the United States retained authority over the military, the federal judiciary, and foreign affairs" (Whalen 27). This means that Puerto Ricans living in the island are unable to vote in national elections. In 1976, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reported the ambiguous status Puerto Ricans still held. Legally, they are American citizens, but culturally they share other values, national myths, and memories different from the Americans'. Therefore, as an ethnic group, Puerto Ricans have been subjected to racism and exclusion (Whalen 40).

In *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States*, Jorge Duany asserts that with the constant movement of Puerto Ricans between the United States and the island, "territorially grounded definitions of national identity become less relevant, while transnational identities acquire greater prominence" (2). Duany suggests that this back-and-forth

movement, or *vaivén* in Spanish, which means fluctuation, is a metaphor for “the nation on the move,” in which Puerto Ricans on the mainland and island have hybrid and fluid identities (2-3). Furthermore, Duany claims that

> none of the traditional criteria for nationhood – a shared territory, language, economy, citizenship, or sovereignty – are fixed and immutable in Puerto Rico and its diaspora but are subject to constant fluctuation and intense debate, even though the sense of peoplehood has proven remarkably resilient throughout. (3)

The resilience of the Puerto Rican identity rests on the prevalence of cultural nationalism, which is based on shared icons, myths, rituals, and memories that distinguish the Puerto Rican nation from others. Cultural nationalism surpasses any loyalty to political parties, and thus to political nationalism (35).

This brief historical survey shows the uniqueness of Puerto Rico’s political status and the singular socio-historical context where Puerto Ricans as a collective and as individuals have constructed and reconstructed their identity. Carr indicates that Puerto Rican hybridity started to form during the Americanization process introduced in the island; however, this characteristic is not particular to the island life only, but also to Puerto Ricans who have settled in the mainland and started living diasporic hybrid experiences.

2. Home Away from Home

Section 2 focuses on two major relevant areas for this study, which are, first, the Latino and Puerto Rican writers in the United States, and, second, the theoretical framework that this study uses in order to analyze Ortiz Cofer's novel. To locate Ortiz Cofer and her work within the literary production in the United States, it is pertinent to provide a brief overview of Latino and Puerto Rican writers, because Puerto Ricans and other Latino migrants in the United States share similar concerns. In addition, this section explores the shift within Puerto Rican literature produced on the mainland from the Nuyorican movement to the emergence of Puerto Rican diaspora literary production, where Ortiz Cofer is situated. On the other hand, section 2.2 presents definitions of the concepts of diaspora, diasporic identity, and home provided various by cultural theorists, and also discusses the connections that literary academics have established between diaspora and the production of literature in the postcolonial transnational world. This section acknowledges that diaspora is a gendered experience, in which a critical reassessment of the traditional Western concept of home is relevant for an understanding of women's and men's experience of diaspora.

2.1 Latino and Puerto Rican Writers in the United States

The word Latino is understood in the United States as a person coming from a Latin American country or having Latin American cultural heritage. A second word, which is at times used interchangeably with Latino, is Hispano. However, Hispano refers to people with Spanish-speaking origins, while Latino includes people with Spanish-speaking or Portuguese-speaking origins. Throughout the United States Latino communities have grown with time, and literary expression has arisen in the form of poetry, short stories, novels and essays. In *Latino Literature in America*, Bridget Kevane indicates that Latino background includes connections to two

homelands. The first, a Spanish-speaking country, from where the writers' parents have come from or where the writers themselves have lived at some point of their lives, and the second, the United States where their families have migrated and established (5-7). In her book, Kevane uses the term Latino to group and study writers only with Spanish-speaking origins.

In *Hispanic Immigrant Literature: El Sueño del Retorno*, Nicolás Kanellos writes about the publications of the first Hispanic immigrants in the United States. Kanellos acknowledges that the literature that has emerged from the Hispanic transmigration challenges the notion of nationhood (81). However, the first transmigrant writers often identified themselves "regionally or tribally and had no real awareness of national identity before immigrating to the United States" (53). Thus, abruptly they perceived themselves imagined by the host nation as Puerto Rican, Cuban, or Mexican. Other people coming from the same countries reinforced the feeling of difference, and recognized their common background (54). According to Kanellos, the dream of return in these communities transpires in immigrant literature. The author claims that

> the ethos of Hispanic immigrant literature is based on the premise of return after what authors and community expect to be a temporary sojourn in the land where work is supposedly ubiquitous and dollars are plentiful and the economic and political instability of the homeland is unknown. Authors or their narrators (or both) dissuade their readers from investing in the American myth of creating a new life, a new self in the United States, where one is supposedly free to develop one's potential, climb the social ladder, and become independently wealthy. (52)

As Kanellos suggests, the first publications by Hispanic migrants in the United States acknowledged the economic nature of migration, but insisted that the formation of one's own character and self was not something to be done within the temporality of the work sojourn.

Therefore, the aim of these publications was to maintain cultural and political stability by asserting that

> remaining in the host country or subscribing to the American national myth or both are regarded as a sign of disloyalty and treachery to the homeland that had nurtured the transmigrants and give them an identity, a worldview, often a complex of shared historical, racial, and even religious orientation. (80)

The first Hispanic publications emphasized the loyalty to the homeland and its values, estimating as treason the belief in the American way of life. Kanellos also recognizes that the project of nation building among the first immigrants to the United States was propelled and dominated by male writers. Furthermore, Kanellos asserts that male writers were very concerned with the role of the domestic sphere in the reproduction of the home nation through the preservation and transmission of national values and history to children, "who would grow up to duplicate the gender roles of their parents as the bulwark of the imagined community" (123). Furthermore, Kanellos claims that the attitudes in graphic and written records in newspapers published by Hispanic immigrants of the beginning of the twentieth century pressure families to conform to their traditional gender roles and resist changes from American culture, which was visible in the "greater freedom of movement and self-determination" that American women enjoyed (144).

Regarding more recent writings and publications of Latino writers, Kevane does not adhere to the idea of the temporary stay in the United States and the safeguard of the homeland values that Kanellos pinpoints in the first generation of Hispanic writers' publications. Instead, Kevane reflects on the hybridity contemporary Latino authors experience:

> the sense of displacement that reveals what it feels like to be Latino: a hybrid, bilingual, bicultural individual who is sharing two worlds, straddling the fence, belonging neither here or there, belonging both here and there, being from two

> worlds, living in the borderlands, living on the hyphen, being a gringoriqueño, a Dominican American, a Dominican York, a gringa Dominican, a nuyorican, neorican, a Chicano, a Mexico Americano. (9)

The varied ethnicities of Latino writers provide their work with a distinctive touch. In their fiction, authors combine elements that are typically associated with American culture with elements from their, or their parents', homeland. Therefore, the homeland diversity is reflected in Latino writers' publications. Contemporary Latino writers include authors such as Dominican Americans Julia Alvarez and Junot Díaz, Mexican Americans Rodolfo Anaya and Sandra Cisneros, Cuban American Cristina García, Puerto Rican American Judith Ortiz Cofer, and Ecuadorian Puerto Rican American Ernesto Quiñonez.

With the multiple places of origin of Latinos and the collision that emerges between the encounter of the cultural codes brought into the United States and the American codes, Latino writers explore the "disparity between the homeland and the new home, and a coming-of-age within this cultural struggle" (Kevane 11). Kevane affirms that the recurrent themes in the works of Latino writers are also related to the escape of poverty or political constraints in the homeland, the traditional gender roles with the macho and the submissive wife and mother, and the importance of religion within the Latino culture (10-11).

In Latin American countries the ethos of the American dream is a powerful image that translates into the possibility of the equality of opportunities for social mobility. Thus, the search for success and a better life has targeted the United States as the only place in the American continent, with the exception of Canada, to escape poverty and deprivation. Some people are able to attain upward social mobility; however, the availability of the American dream is exclusive. Not everybody fulfills it, and in trying to do so, migrants experience all type of hardships.

In addition, in Latin America the influence of the Catholic Church remains powerful, as do the traditional gender roles. According to the 2010 statistics of the Vatican published in *El Nuevo Herald*, 42% of the Catholics in the world live in Latin America. Moreover, out of the 3,97 million people in Puerto Rico, 3,12 million are Catholics (*El Nuevo Herald*). On the other hand, traditional gender roles in Latin America have been supported by the widespread and alleged idea of masculine superiority, commonly known as machismo, which is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as a "[s]trong or aggressive masculine pride." Therefore, the Catholic tradition and traditional gender role discourse popularly available in countries that the Latino writers have left play a relevant role in their work, especially when comparing these imported social codes with the American ones.

The shared sociocultural conditions and communal legacy of the Spanish colony bring Latinos from different countries together. In *Puerto Rican Writers in English: Interviews with Writers*, Carmen D. Hernández stresses that Puerto Ricans and other Latinos in the United States "can recognize each other most as equals than they are with their 'hosts'" (16). They share Spanish as a language, and many immigrants to the United States share a past of hard economic conditions in their homeland. However, Puerto Ricans differentiate from other Latinos in the United States due to their American citizenship, which permits them to move from the island to the mainland as they please. According to Hernández, "[t]he United States' Puerto Ricans are at the cutting edge of a linguistic and cultural frontier between the island and the mainland, crossing over it continuously" (15).

Puerto Rican literature became visible in New York, the greatest receiver city of Puerto Ricans, as a consequence of the cultural nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s. According to Hernández, Piri Thomas paved the way for Puerto Rican writers with his best-selling autobiography *Down These Mean Streets* (1967). Hernández states that Thomas's book

established the parameters for future novels set in New York ghettos, where most Puerto Ricans lived:

> [t]hese novels document, narrate, and dramatize the life conditions of a marginalized sector of society that has had serious problems adjusting to an English-speaking white majority of Anglo-Saxon background. This sector has not only remained in relative poverty, but has to deal on a daily basis (having remained in great numbers in the inner cities), with crime, violence, and temptation in the streets. (3)

In the 1960s, New York Puerto Rican poets started expressing through performative acts the inconsistency between the idea of the American Dream and the harsh realities lived by migrant families. Hernández exemplifies this with the case of the poet Jorge Brando, who could be seen pushing a shopping cart and making verses in the Lower East Side (5). The Nuyorican – a word that comes from the combination of the words New York and Puerto Rican – poets started writing down and publishing their work in a city with an environment full of protest and activism in the 1970s. In their poetry, they "used the words of everyday speech among Puerto Ricans in New York, writing down what was popularly known as 'Spanglish' but can be more aptly described as 'code-switching'" (Hernández 6), which is the alternation between two or more languages in the same communicative act accordingly to each language syntax and phonology. Besides the distinctive use of language, the Nuyorican movement highlighted the everyday life components of Puerto Rican migrants such as prejudice, bureaucracy, and non-adaptability to the city, as well as the poets' interests in eroticism and drugs (Hernández 7).

In "Writing Migrations: The Place(s) of U.S. Puerto Rican Literature," Frances Aparicio claims that the Nuyorican literary movement is of paramount importance for Puerto Rican literature, and asserts that this movement thrived within the community, but remained far from

the canons of Puerto Rican and American literature. While Nuyorican literature has not acquired the same recognition as other branches of American literature such as South Asian or Chicano/a literature, currently the Nuyorican voices are subject of study for their "undeniable impact in reconceptualizing American culture as a multicultural rather than as a national, homogeneous space" (Aparicio 153). The Puerto Rican diaspora imported from the island to the United States traditions that were used as material and inspiration for poems and fiction.

During the formation years of the Nuyorican movement, the only visible work by a woman writer was that of Sandra María Estevez (Hernández 10). She explored the conflicting situation of the Latino woman in the Puerto Rican community and American society. Outside the Nuyorican movement, Nicholasa Mohr depicted the life of the Latino experience in the *barrio* (neighborhood) in her semi-autobiographical novel *Nilda* (1973). Hernández asserts that in Mohr's novel it is possible to find a story line that "follows Nilda's growing consciousness of family economic hardships and the disruption of traditional ties" (10). After Mohr, other Puerto Rican women have continued creating semi-autobiographical work, including Judith Ortiz Cofer's *Line of the Sun* (1989) and Esmeralda Santiago's *When I Was Puerto Rican* (1994).

Aparicio also asserts that the traditional definition and construction of U.S. Puerto Rican literature is based upon the "production of Puerto Rican writers in the diaspora," which in turn is based on the paradigmatic migration pattern from the island to the mainland (151). Furthermore, Aparicio claims that the appearance of Puerto Rican diasporic literary production has undercut the strength of the binary pair Self/Other, which has been constantly present in the traditional Puerto Rican literary production (152). Traditional Puerto Rican literature Aparicio suggests, "has inherited a discursive tradition of hispanophilia" (152), in which male writers have favored the Spanish Heritage over the African, as a measure to counteract the colonization forces of the United States. Therefore, authors writing from the mainland in English have been excluded from

the canon because they do not write in Spanish or target exclusively the United States colonial power over the island. Diasporic Puerto Rican authors' voice comes from the interstices of cultures, American and Puerto Rican, and with this particular characteristic their texts have shown that Puerto Rican identity is not straightforward or homogeneous but questions "the essentializing element of Puerto Rican national identity as it has been forged on the island" (Aparicio 152). Aparicio continues by claiming that it is for this reason that these authors have been excluded from the national imaginaries of Puerto Rico and the United States (152).

Puerto Rican literary production has been compared to Chicano and African American Literatures. In "The Poetics of Aquí: Barriocentrism in Puerto Rican Diaspora Literature from Mean Streets to Neo-Noir," Dalia Kandiyoti claims that Chicano and Puerto Rican literature are similar because they both articulate the battle for a place in the United States through their association with "dominant spatial representation of belonging" and the Chicano and Puerto Rican cultural-spatial particularities (155). On the other hand, Kandiyoti claims that twentieth-century African American and Puerto Rican literatures intersect due to the overlapping of urban settings that both social groups inhabit, locations where culture and politics converge. Therefore, both Puerto Rican and African American writers have located their narratives in limited urban spaces in which they have been marginalized and excluded through racial and class discourses.

Besides these similarities, Kadiyoti claims that Puerto Rican literature differentiates from the other traditions in what she calls "its frequent depiction of 'in-betweenness'" derived from Puerto Rican particular ethnoracial position (156). U.S. Puerto Rican Literature is situated mainly in two locations: "the island homeland and the urban diaspora" (157). Kadiyoti continues to develop the argument of the presence of urban spaces in Puerto Rican literature by identifying the *barrio* as a site of paramount importance to the Puerto Rican diasporic writers. "Barriocentricity" is a choice that some writers take in order to locate specifically the Puerto

Rican diaspora and its consciousness. Kandiyoti does not consider Judith Ortiz Cofer's fiction barriocentric, as in her view Ortiz Cofer focuses on the representation of Puerto Rican experiences rather than the representation of a "collective diasporic loci" (158). Puerto Ricans' own ethnoracial position has directed their writings in diaspora, where marginalization, in-betweenness, and barrio life are included.

2.2 Diaspora, Gendered Experience of Diaspora, and Home

In the introduction of *Homelands and Diaspora: Holy Lands and Other Places*, André Levi and Alex Weingrod define the classic diaspora as the movement of peoples, traditionally Jews, Greeks and Armenians, who were displaced out of their land or lost it, and as a consequence they went to inhabit different territories as "dispersed minorities" (4). Avtar Brah adds, in *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, that diasporas arise from migrations of collectivities that settle permanently in a community formation. Furthermore, William Safran provides a list of criteria in "The Jewish Diaspora in a Comparative and Theoretical Perspective," which allows for the identification of diasporas due to the satisfaction of one or more principles (37): (1) members of diasporas or their ancestors "have been dispersed from a specific original 'center'" and settle in two or more foreign locations; (2) they still have a mythical vision of their homeland; (3) their relationship as minority groups with the host society is difficult and tense, it may include rejection and alienation; (4) they see their homeland as their "ideal home" and long to go back; (5) as an ethnic community, they are committed to their homeland, its restoration, prosperity and safety; (6) they want to survive as a distinct group through the maintenance and transmission of cultural heritage brought with them from their homeland; and (7) their relationships with the homeland are echoed in their group institutions.

Item number four in Safran's list is echoed and slightly modified by James Clifford in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, where he asserts that diasporas mean "constitutive taboo on return, or its postponement to a remote future" as well as long distances and separation (246). Distance from home and moving away from it bring to mind other concepts, namely, those of travelling and movement. Clifford claims that diaspora differentiates from traveling because it is not temporary and implies "dwelling, maintaining communities, having collective homes away from home" (251). In a similar vein, Avtar Brah associates diaspora and journey, though diaspora cannot be equalized to occasional travel or temporary residence. The journey to diaspora involves the opposite of temporality; it means settling down, and as Brah asserts "putting roots 'elsewhere'" (182). Clifford and Brah agree on the use of words travelling and journey, but they both assign to the diasporic experience a more permanent character associated with settling down.

In *Global Diasporas*, Robin Cohen asserts that patterns of people's movements in the current world have questioned the notions of home and host. Cohen affirms that the movement of people is no longer "unidirectional," but made up of "transversal flows" (128), which include different actions with temporary or permanent residence at a place such as visiting, tourism, seasonal work or settlement. Moreover, Levi and Weingrod claim that the number of diasporas has increased, and their movement is shaped by contemporary global trends, which include "global inequalities, modern information and production of technologies, powerful multi-national corporations that frequently shift production across the world" (4), as well as war and famine. One example of the complex patterns of mobility is discussed in Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Gilroy explores the black diaspora and its intricacy, and asserts that it is impossible to reduce black diaspora to a single nationality. Therefore, new patterns of mobility have created the need to approach migration differently.

In "Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration" Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton argue that there is a need for a new conceptualization to explore "the experience and consciousness" of the new migrant (1). They claim that the old notions of immigrant and migrant are not sufficient in a world where a new migration population has surfaced. For Glick Schiller et al., the new migrants do not experience a permanent rupture of old patterns, but a merging of "activities and patterns of life [that] encompass both their host and home societies" (1). The new conceptualization that they consider more appropriate for the situation of the new migrants is called transnationalism. This is defined as "the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement" (1). Furthermore, they explain that transmigrants act, decide, worry, and build their identity within social systems connected to more than one society. Glick Schiller et al.'s approach and conceptualization of transnationalism and transmigrants echoes Levi's and Weingrod's idea of the experience of diaspora no longer as a painful rupture, but as a possibility for merging cultures, as well as Brah's association of diaspora to "hope and new beginnings" (193), and opportunities for collective and individual memories to converge, assemble and reconfigure (193).

In the Introduction of *Mobile Narratives: Travel, Migration, and Transculturation*, Eleftheria Arapoglou, Mónika Fodor, and Jopi Nyman assert that human mobility provides identity with multiple elements that come from different places or cultures. Thus, the migrant's experience abroad (residence, work, and travel) questions single alliances and uniform affiliations (Beck qtd. in Arapoglou et al. 3). The recognition of the diversity of elements provides a new vision of identity, in which a new configuration emerges from hybridity, diaspora, and "local appropriations of imported ideas, practices and texts" (Arapoglou et al. 3). In conclusion, travel and mobility construct transcultural identities (Arapoglou et al. 3).

Clifford asserts that the constitution of diaspora consciousness is formed through negative and positive processes. The negative process is constituted by marginalization experiences that include exclusion and discrimination (256). In *Beginning Postcolonialism*, John McLeod complements the notion of negative constitution by asserting that often diaspora communities have been "ghettoized and excluded from feeling they belong to the 'new country,' and suffered their cultural practices to be mocked and discriminated against" (208). Clifford also suggests that the positive diaspora consciousness is produced through "identification with world-historical cultural/political powers," e.g., Africa and China, which frame the self in a tension between an original political or cultural power and the new country's expectations and values, outlining a distinctive form of being (256). In Clifford's words, "[d]iaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension" (257).

The tension in diasporic experience is read by Gilroy as a matter of origins and mobility. When discussing modern black political culture, Gilroy uses two key terms for diasporic identity studies, and expresses the tension existing between them. In modern political culture the interest has always been directed towards roots and rootedness, but identity has not been seen in terms of movement and mediation, an approach that can be reached with the term routes (19). Significantly, Gilroy's notion of the Black Atlantic evokes movement, and the transcendence of the structure of the nation state. Therefore, it can be concluded that identities in diaspora are not static, and the word routes makes direct reference to movement, in which reconfiguration and reconstitution emerge as main shapers of identity in diasporic experience.

The existence in-between permits the creative reconfiguration and reconstruction of identity. The experience of diasporic subjects and their knowledge of social and cultural codes from different nations or cultures strengthen the critical potential of diasporic experience. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha writes about the potentiality of the in-between existence

suggesting that, “these ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (1-2). Therefore, diasporic experience is a domain for the inventive redefinition of individual and group identity, which plays an important role in the interaction of different cultural groups.

In their works, diasporic writers use as tropes components of the diasporic experience such as identity, hybridity, and home. In *From Shadow to Presence: Representations of Ethnicity in Contemporary American Literature*, Jelena Šesnić asserts that the diasporic foundational trope is the “missing home” and its constant evocation through its imaginative reconstruction (188). In *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain*, Shusheila Nasta asserts that it is not only about a lost homeland, but the desire to rewrite home while accepting the current exile from it (7); furthermore, in *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Literature* Gina Wisker claims that diasporic writers finding and expressing their sense of identity, location, and voice tend to take one of two paths. The first is an expression of loss, disorientation, and dislocation, which comes from the liminality they inhabit. The second is an expression that celebrates hybridity and cultural change (27). Wisker goes further to assert that some diasporic writers feel a sense of responsibility to represent their communities and also their family roots. Moreover, authors reflect on their hybridity and their locality in several cultures problematizing the alleged national homogeneity (28). Diasporic authors write about a wide range of aspects of life, not dedicating their texts solely to the contribution of diasporic expression; however, Wisker also acknowledges that diasporic writers may reflect on topics such as “identity, home and memory, cultural assimilation and change, and discourse” (30).

In literary studies, many analyses have been published about protagonists and characters in diasporic themed novels, which challenge essentialized identities. In *Narratives for a New*

Belonging: Diasporic Cultural Fictions, Roger Bromley studies novels such as Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992), where the daughter of a migrant experiences the "here" by growing up in the United States, while the "there" of her Cuban parents is constantly present. According to Bromley, the experience of migrant women is part of Edwidge Danticat's *Caroline's Wedding* (1991), where a mother and two daughters with Haitian background experience life in New York through their split identity. In *Home, Identity, and Mobility in Contemporary Diasporic Fiction*, Jopi Nyman discusses Ana Castillo's *Sapogonia* (1990), which locates its characters "in varying spaces of in-betweenness" (163), as well as Bharati Mukherjee's *Leave It to Me* (1997), where the main American character investigates her Indian parents' and her own past.

Bromley asserts that characters in diasporic cultural fictions live in hybrid realities with hyphenated identities that hinder categorization and control, and challenge essentializing approaches. Bromley continues by claiming that in these in-between zones identity is ceaselessly constructed and deconstructed (5). Therefore, diasporic identity is not fixed and the new setting's conditions affect its constitution and allow its reconfiguration. According to Silvia Schutermandl and Sebnem Toplu's introduction to a *Fluid Sense of Self: The Politics of Transnational Identity*, identity is performed. Schutermandl and Toplu assert that a "person's cultural identity" is the outcome of personal and conscious decisions to "perform an identity," which feature the embrace of particular cultural characteristics (14). The process of identification is situated in the "politics of motion" and "politics of belonging." The first notion emphasizes the routes of migration that people follow before arriving to their corresponding "home." Furthermore, the concept of politics of motion counters the essentialist, static and enclosed concept of place as a site where political identity is developed. "National borders are permeable," and thus they cannot circumscribe all the criteria that nurture the "politics of transnational identity" (Schutermandl and Toplu 20). On the other hand, the politics of belonging allows one to think about the maintained interconnections

between people with their transnational communities as a way to secure the development of the self.

It should be noted that diaspora is a gendered experience. Clifford asserts that if the diasporic experience is seen in terms of "displacement rather than placement, traveling rather dwelling, and disarticulation rather than rearticulation," the experiences that will predominate are these of men (259). Clifford ponders upon the question of whether diaspora strengthens or undoes gender subordination, and answers it with two arguments. Firstly, Clifford asserts that the patriarchal structures might be maintained through the conservation of connections with homelands, and the preservation of cultural and religious traditions. Secondly, Clifford states that diaspora interactions may open up the way for new roles, demands, and political space (259). Clifford continues by noting that diasporic existence might lead to the renegotiation of traditional gender roles: women who earn money may also gain control and independence. Furthermore, women in diaspora deal with multiple concerns such as "material and spiritual insecurities of exile, with demands of family and work, and with the claims of old and new patriarchies" (259). Clifford also adds that women in diaspora are attached and empowered by "a 'home' culture and tradition" that include preserved and adapted "religion, speech and social patterns, and food, body and dress protocols" (259).

Home is a central concept that connects with gender and the experience of diaspora. In *Transnational Women's Fiction: Unsettling Home and Homeland*, Susan Strehle begins defining what home has traditionally meant in the West. Home is thought as a private place, a location for settlement, which is separated from the public arena. Strehle continues by saying that home has traditionally been associated with women, to whom it belongs and where they settle and organize domestic affairs. In *The Politics of Home*, Rosemary Marangoly George shares the characteristics of home provided by Strehle. George states that the immediate connotation of home is of a

private sphere, which features "shelter, comfort, nurture and protection" (1). On the other hand, home works selectively, including and excluding, and thus establishing differences (George 2). The inclusions are based on a sense of kinship that emerges from components such as religion, blood, class, gender or class. At this point the definition that George provides for home is relevant. The author asserts that

> [h]omes are manifest on geographical, psychological and material levels. They are places that are recognized as such by those within and those without. They are places of violence and nurturing. A place that is flexible, that maintains itself in various forms and yet whose reinvention seems to follow the basic pattern of inclusions/exclusions. Home is a place to escape to and a place to escape from. Its importance lies in the fact that it is not equally available to all. Home is the desired place that is fought for and established as the exclusive domain of a few. It is not a neutral place. (9)

What George suggests is that home is not an impartial or disinterested site. Home can have the explicit aim to protect, or it can be a place of terror, which a person longs to escape. This double nature of home can be identified in "Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with it?" by Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, where home is considered to be a notion and a longing, as well as a power and an allure. Martin and Mohanty's article is based on their reading of Minnie Bruce Pratt's "Identity Skin Blood Heart," an autobiographical narrative located in the self-identification of a woman with characteristics such as "white, middle-class, Christian-raised, southern, and lesbian," and her exploration of home, identity and community (193).

Martin and Mohanty propose a three level approach to Pratt's text that includes "the geography, demography, and architecture of the communities that are her 'homes'" (195). By suggesting the word "homes," Martin and Mohanty identify in Pratt's autobiographical narrative

her mobility and belonging to more than one community throughout her personal history. Furthermore, Martin and Mohanty address the connection between Pratt's individual and familial history and the history of other members in her communities, who have struggled and have been exploited in the same geographical location, which they also call home (195). In Martin and Mohanty's analysis, a tension between a binary opposition is proposed: "being home" and "not being home." As Martin and Mohanty explain,

> "Being home" refers to the place where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries; "not being home" is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even within oneself. (196)

The safety that home offers contrasts with the vulnerability that some people may experience within it. The unity that home evokes in one's mind might be challenged by the incongruity of disparate experiences of home by different members of a community. What Martin and Mohanty see in Pratt's own account is that stability is perceived in the concreteness and physicality of architecture. However, they also assert that "the very stability, familiarity, and security of these physical structures are undermined by the discovery that these buildings and streets witnessed and obscured particular race, class, and gender struggles" (196).

Home it is not only related to a private familial space, or a home community that can be safe and risky at the same time, it is also associated to the limits of nations. Strehle connects home with homeland by stating that both imply "a settled" and "homogeneous place" (2). Furthermore, homeland in its contemporary meaning seeks to separate foreign spaces, make suspects of racialized others, and expand supervisory power (2). Besides emphasizing protection from strangers, homeland evokes fraternity, comradeship, and togetherness. This might be why narratives of the family are used to construct nations or homelands (3).

An example of the role of the family in the maintenance of values of the homelands is "Gendered Geographies of Home: Mapping Second and Third Generation Puerto Ricans' Sense of Home," where Maura I. Toro-Morn and Marixsa Alicea discuss the findings of a series of interviews conducted among second and third generation Puerto Ricans in the United States. The notions the interviewees hold of home are, as the authors explain, "complex and diverse" because many times second generation children dismiss homeland culture (194). However, they also recognize that some aspects of the homeland might be embraced, especially those that form identity in racial and ethnic terms (196). On the other hand, Toro-Morn and Alicea suggest that gender expectations are challenged by second and third generation Puerto Ricans, who are aware of the power relationships and repression found in the traditional gender role system.

According to Toro-Morn and Alicea, Puerto Rican homes had a major role constructing home diasporic communities based on Puerto Rican values and symbols. The authors assert that,

> Puerto Rican immigrants' homes served as the primary space were children were socialized into traditional Puerto Rican ways of living. It was the site where 'traditions,' distinct from 'American' ways were produced. Consequently, parents subscribed to the traditional gender division of labor in which men function as providers and women are relegated to being caretakers of the home and children. Underlying this gender division of labor is a patriarchal ideology, machismo, emphasizing men's sexual freedom, virility, and aggressiveness and women's sexual expression and submission. (202)

According to the interviews, sons and daughters of migrant parents were socialized in agreement with this ideology. Daughters, particularly, were under pressure because they were raised to value greatly motherhood, family, and their virginity. In addition, they were expected to be responsible for childbearing as they entered preadolescent years (Toro-Morn and Alicea 203-

4). However, the values instilled into children did not matched reality. Second and third generation Puerto Rican interviewees were witnesses of their mothers' double shift, which included family and work responsibilities. Even though Puerto Rican mothers "encouraged their daughters to be good housewives and teach them the household is their domain," they themselves hold a work position outside the household (Toro-Morn and Alicea 206).

Generational differences make possible to think about the gendered experience of diaspora because men and women from different generations may be subjected to different constraints. In the introduction to *Unsettling the Bildungsroman: Reading Contemporary Ethnic American Women's Fiction*, Stella Bolaki comments on the relationship between mothers and first generation daughters born in the United States depicted in Bildungsroman stories. Bolaki asserts that in most cases there are clashes between the immigrant mother and the American born daughter. This tension between mother and daughter allows the exploration of "generational and linguistic differences" (23). Brah also acknowledges the differences between generations by saying that the first generation is still close to what was left behind, and thus dislocation and displacement have been experienced recently. Therefore, the efforts of the first generation are directed to understand and negotiate the new social and cultural reality. Brah continues by saying that within each generation, there will be changes in the experiences of men and women. An important argument is that the form of patriarchy from the homeland will not be replaced with the one of the new country, but transformations and rearticulations will occur (Brah 196).

The present study requires the concept of diaspora because it establishes a differential constitution of identity. Diasporic people are influenced by different cultural codes, which do not have a single origin. The constitution of multiple alliances derived from transnationalism shows that subjects in diaspora have the option to choose which cultural codes to perform in order to affiliate to selected cultural or political identifiers. To study the particular nature of the subjects

and the diasporic community in *The Line of the Sun*, it is necessary to recognize the affiliations to Puerto Ricanness and Americanness as revealed in customs, rituals, and values associated with both societies. Furthermore, home as a private locus, of which women are in charge, reproduces the values of the homeland and socializes children in them. The collective existence of these homes in diaspora is vital, because they construct the home communities reproducing the imported values of the homeland. This study will show, the diasporic home community of El Building adheres to values and behaviors that are considered acceptable in the original home community, and which have been part of the socialization in private homes in the flats in El Building.

3. Diasporic Experience in *The Line of the Sun*

The diasporic experience in *The Line of the Sun* depicts the difficulties of establishing a home away from home. The construction of home in diaspora is a double construction that involves the private home where women are in charge of socializing children in the Puerto Rican values and style of life, and the communal home where factors such as geography, demography, and architecture determine exclusions and inclusions to a particular home community.

This section explores the relationship between diaspora and its maintenance through the notion of safety and protection that home evokes. The diasporic community of El Building is turned into a secure site through the preservation of the homeland values in the private home, as well as in the regulation of the home community through the reproduction of the homeland communal mechanisms and behavioral codes. However, the home community does not provide safety to all of its members, as some of them are excluded through accepted mechanisms of home community regulation.

In section 3.1, the diasporic home community is explored in the light of Safran's list of criteria to identify a diaspora; other theorists' definitions and associations are also used. In addition, this section compares the differential character of diasporic experience according to gender, using Clifford's ideas on the subject. Section 3.2 approaches the reality of the idealized home in the homeland, reflecting on the situation of the Vivente family in Salud, Puerto Rico; this section also examines Salud as a home community using Martin and Mohanty's notion of home. In Section 3.3 El Building is approached using the same home community approach. Finally, section 3.4 explores the differential experience of diaspora between three women in the narrative: Rosa, Ramona, and Marisol. The section analyzes their belonging to different home communities, as well as the distinct private homes they have been part of and the ones they long for.

3.1 Diasporic Home Community

As stated above, *The Line of the Sun* is a family story told from the perspective of a second generation diasporic female member. Marisol, the granddaughter of Mamá Cielo, reveals herself as the narrator of the story on the first page, where she acknowledges her kinship to the family whose events she narrates on the first part of the book. As mentioned in section 1.2, the book is divided into two parts, of which Marisol only witnesses and participates in the second. The first part is a reconstruction of the family's life in Puerto Rico before Marisol's birth. Marisol is able to recreate the major events of her family on the island through the stories she has heard; the importance of speech is uncovered in the frequent use of the expression "they say," which is repeated sixteen times in the first section of the book and seven times in the epilogue. The second part of the book has Marisol as a direct witness and participant in the events that develop in the diasporic home community of El Building.

The first part of this analysis uses Safran's list of principles, with complementary ideas from other cultural theorists, for the identification of a diaspora, and examines how the community at El Building is in fact a diaspora. The second part explores how men and women in the diasporic home community of El Building experience diaspora differently based on their traditional gender roles. Here, Clifford's terms of displacement and placement are used to refer, respectively, to the novel's men and women, and what is expected from them traditionally.

El Building can be considered a diasporic community in the light of the concepts provided by Levi and Weingrod, Brah, and Safran. First, the people in El Building have been displaced from their land (Levi and Weingrod 4). Marisol states that "[t]here, in an apartment building inhabited mainly by Puerto Ricans families, we lived the first few years" (169). Therefore, the majority of people in this community are of Puerto Rican origin. It is not possible to know what the percentage of the population that comes directly from the island is, but Ramona, Rafael, and

Guzmán exemplify the older Puerto Rican generation that has moved from the island to the mainland. Second, although the Santacruz-Vivente family does not account as a migration of a big collectivity, they do settle permanently in a community formed by mostly by Puerto Rican migrants (Brah). Thus, individual or nuclear family migration contributes to the formation of diasporic communities and the establishment of networks.

Under Safran's list of criteria for identification of diasporas, the community of El Building meets six out of the seven principles. The first principle includes the displacement proposed by Levi and Weingrod, this is, the dispersion from a center, and adds the settlement in two or more foreign locations. This criterion is recognizable in the novel in two relatively close locations in the United States: New York and New Jersey. Though a diasporic community resident in New York is not explicitly described in the novel, there are many indications that the Puerto Rican population is high in number in that city. In the first part of the book, New York first appears as a site for the establishment of migrants when the story of Pura Rosa and her brothers is disclosed: "[a]ll three of them, two sons and a daughter, lived in New York City. They had moved there as teenagers and had not returned to the Island again" (20). In addition, another family story revealed in Salud evidences migration and settlement of relatives in New York City. A friend of Carmelo named Isabel has a married sister living in New York (48), who sends her English books to practice the language (49). Therefore, there are individual stories that account for Puerto Ricans' relocation in New York City, although there is no full explicit description of a diasporic community.

In the second part of the novel, the presence of Puerto Ricans in New York City is strengthened by Rafael and Guzmán's own experiences as expatriates. When Rafael arrives in Brooklyn Yard, he realizes that Puerto Ricans in New York City are rough and rowdy: "[t]wo years in New York City had taught him that a street-tough Puerto Rican Immigrant is not the

same species as the usually gentle and hospitable Islander" (170). On the other hand, Guzmán's own adventures lead him to a different conclusion about Puerto Ricans in New York City: they are affable, amiable, and numerous. When he tells his survival story in the mean streets of the city to Ramona and Rafael, he says, "Most days, while she sleep [Rosalind], I wandered around the neighborhood and made friends. I couldn't believe how many Island people live in New York" (198). Finally, there is one further strong indication of Puerto Ricans living in New York City. By the end of the novel, the spiritist meeting in Paterson, New Jersey, receives guests coming from the Big Apple: "[n]ews of the spiritist meeting had made its way to relatives and friends in New York City" (254). As stated above, the novel only provides hints of the Puerto Ricans living in diaspora in New York City. However, historical information supports the settlement of Puerto Rican migrants in this metropolis, as the most significant receiver of Puerto Ricans in the United States. On the other hand, Paterson, New Jersey, is the location of the community of expatriate Puerto Ricans living in El Building. Therefore, there is evidence to categorize the Puerto Rican community in *The Line of the Sun* as a diasporic community under Safran's first principle.

Safran's second proposition is based on a mythical vision of the homeland. In *The Line of the Sun*, Puerto Rico's legendary greatness is contained in both parts of the novel. In the first section, Puerto Rico, Salud specifically, is reconstructed as a mythical land, where lush vegetation provides food and shade for people. On one occasion, as the novel puts it, "Carmelo had stopped to rest under a mango tree whose branches were so low and thick that they practically formed a little hut" (5). Nature supplies people's needs for food and shelter. The earth is benign, the crops and grooves are everywhere, from the experimental farm in high school, where "[b]ananas, papayas, breadfruit, and other fruits and vegetables were grown and tended by the students" (3), to Pura Rosa's valley, where Guzmán

> helped her tend her garden. She taught him the names of each plant and what it was used for. Black sage was boiled into a tea and taken as a purgative. Geranium, its leaves dried and burned like incense, kept mosquitoes and (she chuckled) evil spirits away. Mint was used for dispelling the evil influences that hide in the body as gas. The seeds of the papaya fruit steeped in boiling water would make your blood thick and red, rekindling waning passions. (34-5)

In this reconstruction through the paths of memory, Marisol acknowledges Puerto Rico as an abundant land, whose products are available to all in order to heal Puerto Ricans' bodies and spirits. Therefore, the first part of the novel romanticizes the homeland and the relationship its inhabitants have with it.

On the other hand, in the second part of the novel, Marisol herself uses the verb romanticize to catalogue what her mother does with her friends when they talk about the island: "their main topic after husband and children was the Island. They would become misty and lyrical in describing their illusory Eden. The poverty was romanticized and relatives attained mythical proportions in the heroic efforts to survive in an unrelenting world" (174). Marisol's unequivocal assertion of how the older generation idealizes the homeland and their own lives on the island contrasts with her own romantization of the luscious and idyllic land. Moreover, Marisol herself participates in the idealization of her relatives on the island in the reconstruction she does of their lives. Mamá Cielo is not only a powerful woman in Ramona's view when Marisol says, "How Mamá Cielo managed to raise all of us on nothing is a wonder to me" (175); Marisol's reconstruction also portrays her as a mighty fierce mother, who would give or do anything for her children but "spare the rod" (1). Even though Marisol mindfully assigns the homeland magnification as an activity carried out by women of her mother's expatiate generation, she cannot escape the glorification of her roots. As Šesnić asserts, the trope of the

missing home in diasporic literature is at its foundation (188), and Marisol as the narrator of the novel evocates home through an imaginative reconstruction. Furthermore, she rewrites home in the sense proposed by Nasta (7), accepting her family and the Building's population exile from Puerto Rico.

Safran's third principle is based on the tense relationship of the diasporic community as a minority group and the host society. *In The Line of the Sun*, El Building is inhabited mainly by Puerto Ricans who rent their tenement flats from Jewish landlords, who in turn bought the inner-city properties in order to lease them to black and Puerto Ricans (177). This purchase has been done because "[t]he white middle classes were moving out to the fringes, West Paterson, East Paterson" (177). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the relationship with the host society is not an unstrained one; the white middle classes are moving away from the places that the Puerto Ricans inhabit, and the Jewish people are acquiring all the dwellings in order to rent them out. Thus, the Puerto Ricans live in tension with other segments of society, who are not willing to share the same space with them. Furthermore, they exert control over the living areas, which Puerto Ricans can occupy, through economic dominion (rent), and white middle-class exclusively populated areas (suburbs). In the novel, there is a moment in which a middle-class doctor transgresses the informal arrangement of neighborhood segregation, and the strain between Puerto Ricans and middle-class Americans surfaces. Marisol writes about Doctor Roselli, her friend's father, driving her to El Building after a Christmas dinner at his home:

> [w]e were getting close to El Building. I wished I could just ask him to drop me off a block away. I could see there was a crowd of men and boys gathered on the front steps, probably drinking. One of them had a loud radio: it was blaring salsa music. The doctor pulled up to the curb. He came around to open my door and a snowball thrown from the alley next to El Building got him square in the back of

> his head. He almost lost his balance and had to hold on to the car. I reached for his arm but he yanked it back angrily. (189)

The tension between the host society and Puerto Ricans becomes physical aggression in this passage. The attack takes place in the Puerto Rican zone, when the unaccompanied man faces a group of boisterous and dissatisfied men who find the opportunity to humiliate a representative of the higher positions in Paterson's racial hierarchy. Therefore, the segregation of the zones functions as a component to maintain the ethnoracial exclusion, which evidences the tension between the minority group and the host society. In this segregation system, African American people are included as competitors and sharers of space and job opportunities with Puerto Ricans. The tense relationship among African Americans and Puerto Ricans will be examined in section 3.3 under the home community demography theme. In addition, Clifford asserts that the constitution of diaspora consciousness is partly created through marginalization experiences (256), like zone segregation in Paterson. McLeod supports this statement by claiming that diasporic communities are ghettoized and discriminated against (208), like the people in El Building.

The homeland as the "ideal home" and the yearning for return is Safran's fourth tenet, which can be complemented by Clifford's claim that diasporas imply a taboo on return or its delay to the future. In *The Line of the Sun*, return to the homeland is a powerful incentive for the members of the diasporic community in El Building to survive and work in the mainland. To quote the novel:

> She [Ramona], like the other voluntary exiles in El Building, *talked* about returning to the homeland, but the implicit understanding was that one could not go back empty-handed, except for the funeral of parents, unless you were trash to begin with and didn't mind admitting failure. (229)

In the novel, returning to the island is connected to thriving financially on the mainland in order to return to the homeland prosperous and successful. Guzmán and Gabriel had that idea before they travelled to the mainland: "[r]emember the last time we saw each other how we swore we'd go back rich men?" (205). Therefore, returning home supposes the avoidance of the economic limitations that many Puerto Ricans experienced on the island before their arrival in diaspora. Guzmán's words on the subject show how the idea of returning without the pressure of hardship is equally spread among the inhabitants of El Building:

> I dreamt of going back to the Island in style. You know, send a car first. A big black car. Have it delivered to Mamá Cielo's house in Salud. Then I would arrive in a new suit, a wallet thick with dollars in my pocket. Stupid, isn't it? Every bastard in this building is dreaming that same dream right now. (216-17)

Brah's idea of hope and new beginnings (193) is lived by the inhabitants of El Building's diasporic community. However, Guzmán acknowledges that the new beginning has not lived up to his expectations, and he expresses his disenchantment.

Safran's fifth principle to identify diasporas is the commitment they have as ethnic communities to the restoration and safety of the homeland. Ortiz Cofer's novel is not a political story, and the characters do not show any type of engagement in the political matters of the homeland. As mentioned in the earlier studies of the novel section, Magnani qualifies the novel as the constitution of an "apolitic ethnicity" based on the characters' interiozation of imperial discourses (178). In the novel, there is no indication of any character questioning the position of Puerto Rico within the political map of the United States. Furthermore, no character considers examining and taking actions in order to improve the political situation of Puerto Ricans living in diaspora and on the mainland. Therefore, El Building community does not have a political

agenda to assist Puerto Rico's struggle for equality within the United States. In Duany's words, it is possible to say that cultural nationalism is stronger than political nationalism (35) in the novel.

Magnani's claim that Marisol negates in her narration the national-political history is supported by the use of binary pairs in the narrative, as well as in her eagerness to be accepted by the host population, and her alleged superiority to most members in the diasporic community. Marisol refers to the members of the community as loiterers and urchins. She writes, "I hated going into the gloomy little Spanish grocery store with its fishy smell and loiterers who always had something smart to say to women" (221). When explaining why her brother does not have friends at El Building she describes the kids in the community as "rowdy," and "street-wise urchins" (249). It can be concluded that from Marisol's point of view the members of the community are inferior to her brother and herself. Thus, Marisol's superiority prevents her from including in her narration the political situation of Puerto Ricans and their homeland in relation to the United States. Therefore, neither the characters nor the narration have any intention of restoring or defending the homeland.

The transmission of cultural heritage and the willingness to survive as a distinct group is Safran's sixth criterion. In the novel, the eagerness to maintain Puerto Rican traditions is a strong force. Mothers and women have an important role in preserving the homeland customs such as cuisine, gender roles, and the Catholic religion. This can be seen in the following passage:

> Fortified in their illusion that all could be kept the same within the family as it had been on the Island, women decorated their apartments with every artefact that enhanced the fantasy. Religious objects imported from the Island were favorite wall hangings. Over the kitchen table in many apartments hung the Sacred Heart, disturbing in its realistic depiction of the crimson organ bleeding in an open palm,

> like the grocer's catch-of-the-day. And Mary could always be found smiling serenely from the walls. (172)

In El Building, traditions are not suppressed. They are an important component of daily life. The people in this community do not seek to abandon their cultural heritage, or to be fully assimilated into the host society, with the exception of Marisol.

Safran's last principle, in which the communal institutions reflect the religious, cultural, political, and/or economic relationships with the homeland (37), is observable in institutions such as the family and *Santería*. In the private home, families reproduce the values of the island; moreover, men and women conduct themselves according to the island's acceptable behaviors and teach them to their children. For example, when Ramona and Rafael discuss how Marisol will start menstruating soon, they worry about Marisol's company. In the conversation Rafael asks, "Have you seen her [Marisol] with any boys?" (180). This circumstance echoes the position people on the island have towards the safeguard of woman's virginity. On the other hand, the *Santería* is preserved in El Building through spiritist events, which recreate the religious beliefs from the island and maintains them in the diasporic community. The diasporic community's purpose to recreate through its institutions the life on the island, reflects the relationship between the homeland and the diasporic community.

One unobservable characterization of diaspora in the community of El Building is Gilroy's notion of the Black Atlantic. Its idea of complex patterns deriving from the multiple places of origin of the black diaspora members that play a role in their identity formation is not applicable to the Puerto Rican diaspora as such. Puerto Ricans come from one single island, and as American citizens they are free to move from the island to the mainland as they please. However, their legal nationality does not make them equal in practice to the rest of the American population due to their culturally distinct customs. Therefore, as migrants, Puerto Ricans

experience what Glick Schiller et al. call a merging of "activities and patterns" (1) that include both those of the home and host society. In El Building, the transmigrants act, decide, and build their identity in social fields that link the homeland and the host land. Moreover, they maintain multiple alliances. Puerto Ricans in El Building form networks of support, while they are associated with the English speaking population to run errands and maintain a job.

The community of El Building is qualified as a diaspora when examined in the light of the principles postulated by Safran. To use Clifford's terms, El Building is a collective home away from home. Within the community of El Building, the journey to diaspora includes displacement from the homeland to settle down permanently in a community abroad. This is to be maintained through the imported traditions, which have travelled along the transmigrants to a foreign land.

Furthermore, the diasporic experience of a group is not lived uniformly by men and women who belong to it. In *The Line of the Sun*, men and women experience diaspora differently. In El Building, diaspora as a gendered experience is revealed in terms of both "displacement" and "placement" to use Clifford's words (259). These two terms refer respectively to men, if thought of as agents who travel and move, and women, if thought of as residents and settlers; both terms signal a traditional experience of gender roles. In El Building the traditional gender logic is experienced. However, this does not mean that gender subordination is fortified in the diasporic community; although it is not undone either, women have their own ways to achieve self-determination.

In the novel, the experience of men and women is explored evenly. However, the reader gets a sense of knowing the women more intimately than the men. The reason for this is that the apartments inside El Building are important areas for the plot to unravel: both the Santacruz-Vivente's and Elba La Negra's flat are filled and mainly handled by women. On the other hand, the reader never gets much insight into the working life of the men of El Building. There are

constant references to the difficulties they endure when trying to find and keep a job; however, their actual work places are never revealed or described. The lack of awareness of the men's working life does not impede approaching their experience of diaspora, but it does make it feel rather distant when compared to the women's.

Men and women in El Building experience the dislocation created by living outside their homeland daily, especially when facing the host society. The daily life of adults is not simple. The mental effort that they are required to use outside the safety of El Building is emotionally disturbing. *The Line of the Sun* addresses the predicament of adults in diaspora by stating that

> [t]he adults conducted their lives in two worlds in blithe acceptance of cultural schizophrenia, going to work or on errands in the English-speaking segment, which they endured either with the bravura of the Roman gladiator or with the down-cast-eyed humility that passed for weakness on the streets. (171-2)

Living Puerto Rican culture within the racialized American context is not an easy task, but adults do what they can to maintain their traditions amidst a hostile host society. For example, they are a community that suffers from police harassment; during the Santería event there are "two police cars stopping in front" of El Building (258).

Clifford's terms of displacement and placement form a binary pair that can be used to examine the diasporic experience of men and women in El Building. As stated before, the novel follows the traditional gender roles in which the man is the breadwinner and the woman stays at home as the caretaker, although some women also work. Therefore, displacement can be seen as the possibility of freedom of movement that men enjoy in the diasporic setting, while placement is the established role that women comply with by staying at home. Both terms are seemingly strict and inflexible, reproducing fixed possibilities for the life of men and women. However positive a quality displacement may seem when understood as freedom of movement and choice,

it cannot be decontextualized, because even this autonomy, restricted in an ethnoracial system, can turn into crisis and desperation. On the other hand, placement even if it appears as a restriction and an alleged lack of self-determination, can transform into empowerment because women gain control of and participate actively in the regulation of the community.

Traditional gender roles are part of the customs that the diasporic community of El Building maintains. Men seek to maintain their breadwinner status through the freedom of mobility that they are traditionally entitled with. In the novel, most male inhabitants of El Building work in factories in order to support their families financially. Some women, Ramona's friends, are said to work in factories too (174). However, many others stay at home and comply with housewife duties such as cooking: "[i]n El Building, women cooked with their doors open as a sign of hospitality. Hard-to-obtain items like green bananas from the Island, plantains, and breadfruit were shared" (171). Another example is doing the laundry: "it was impossible to avoid El Basement, where the washing machines and dryers that several of the women had bought collectively were kept" (171). Women in El Building form a strong network of support that provides material and emotional assistance. As an example, Marisol writes about her mother that

> [a]ll her activities were done in groups of women. Though Rafael despised the gossip societies of El Building, he could do little to prevent Ramona from forming close bonds with the other women while he was away. The ones who did not work in factories formed shifting cliques based on their needs and rarely ventured out alone. They went shopping together, patronizing only certain stores; they attended the Spanish mass at ten o'clock on Sundays to hear the youthful Father Jones struggle through the service in heavily accented lisped Castilian, and they visited each other daily discussing and analyzing their expatriate condition endlessly. (174)

Women at El Building provide support to one another, they bond while men are not at home. Gossip acts as a differentiator between women and men, and it also nourishes women's assigned placement at home by providing them with a strategy of empowerment. Through gossip women keep track of the social movement in El Building. Marisol describes the use of gossip by the women in El Building in the following way:

> Ramona's women friends, who had kept their distance during Rafael's stay (behind our backs they called him the Gringo) came back with their usual stories. There had been fights, separations, reconciliations; someone's dead husband was haunting her apartment, and a spiritist meeting was being arranged with the enthusiasm and noise usual for large wedding preparations. (207)

Being informed about the love life of other tenants leads to confrontations at El Building. As Marisol writes,

> [T]he bad times, however, included free-for-all quarrels in which neighbors were called in to witness for a scorned wife: "Estela, did you or did you not see my Antonio with that whore Tita at the pool hall on Saturday?" Of course, after the arguments were over, the third party would inevitably be scorned by one or the other as an interfering fool. (171)

Gossip empowers women to control who they include in the diasporic home community at El Building. The Women's network is strengthened by a chain of trust that reproduces the stories of fights and reconciliations, which leads to the exclusion of any misbehaving party. Gossip is also a strong force in the homeland, and its use in the diasporic home community fosters togetherness, as well as population control. In addition to this way of empowerment through a method socially allocated to women, women in El Building take into their hands the spiritual unsteadiness of the community and look for a solution to it. The preparation of a *Santería* event to sooth the

uneasiness of the members of the community is taken earnestly by the organizing women: "Ramona with her endless preparations for her spiritist meeting, which, as the days went by, became obsessively important to the women, almost a countercampaign to the one [the strike] the men were planning on the street corners and in the basement" (232).

In other ethnic literary works, women's networks are of paramount importance to the development of the narrative, such as in the case of *Women of the Brewster Place* by the African American writer Gloria Naylor. According to Mahboobeh Khaleghi, in Naylor's novel there is an extraordinary bond between women of different generations; furthermore, "a community of women emerges sustaining, enabling, and enriching the lives of each other" (131). Another example of the strength of women's networks is Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. In "Significance of Sisterhood and Lesbianism in Fiction of Women of Color," Uplabdhi Sangwan claims that the "bonds between women" contribute to Celine's, the protagonist, search of selfhood, and that the impact of other female characters, such as Sophia, Shug and Nettie, enable her transformation into an autonomous woman who controls her finances and has agency over body (179).

While women in El Building prepare to heal the community's spirit, men get ready to deal with the crisis that questions their role as breadwinners and as men. Their displacement or possibility for freedom of movement is challenged by the many lay-offs. As Marisol says,

> I heard men talking about the bosses and the factories, how they hired and fired at will, giving jobs to blacks moving up from the South or out from New York City or worse, to newly arrived paisanos, who were desperate for work and would accept low pay and demeaning work conditions. (232)

If men are not able to keep their jobs there are consequences in two domains. First, economically they are unable to fulfill their responsibilities at home. Second, their role as breadwinners is not

realized, and thus their manhood is questioned. The men in El Building decide to act, and take this misfortune to the streets in the form of a strike. In Marisol's words,

> Several other men had arrived and were talking in hushed tones at the top of the steps. I managed to catch a few sentences as I slipped by their surprised faces and into the streets. It was the factory they were discussing. Someone had said *huelga*, a strike. They were planning a strike. (225-6)

The men in El Building experience diaspora through their entitlement to freedom. However, the racialized system that they live in, along with the need for cheap labor in factories puts their autonomy at risk. On the other hand, the women win autonomy through the preparation of an event intended to ease everyone's spirits, as well as in using gossip as a population control method. The outcome of gossip is the exclusion of certain members of the home community. Finally, the men's freedom of movement experience, displacement, in diaspora does not guarantee the outcome expected. The men in El Building are desperate because they are unable to keep their jobs. On the other hand, placement transforms in empowerment for women as they gain autonomy and attain control within the home diasporic community.

3.2 Remembering Home in the Homeland

This section explores the private home of the Vivente family in Puerto Rico and the home community of Salud. The discussion of the Vivente home in Puerto Rico shows the values used for the socialization of the first diaspora generation. In addition, it shows how ambivalent private home can be; it is safe and unsafe at the same time, even in the homeland. On the other hand, this section analyzes the home community of Salud in order to show that it is not a neutral place, but a site where inclusions and exclusions occur. Both parts of the analysis contribute to recognizing

the ways of living that the diasporic home community recreates on the basis of what is remembered from the original home in the homeland.

In the Viventes' working-class home in Puerto Rico, the traditional expectation that women are in charge of the organization of domestic affairs is met. Mamá Cielo is the main caregiver at her home. Not only is she in command of the children’s upbringing, fulfilling women’s socially established function, but she also participates in earning the household income. Marisol writes about her grandmother’s economic contribution that “[t]o make extra money during the hard years, Mamá Cielo sold hot lunches to the men working in the cane fields and at the *Central*, the sugar refinery just outside town” (4). Mamá Cielo is a determined woman who takes the role of a partial breadwinner in scarcity times.

In the novel, Papá Pepe’s role as a provider is never jeopardized by his wife’s temporary economic activity. Mamá Cielo does not need a job to gain self-determination because she is portrayed as an autonomous, resolute, and independent woman, whereas Papá Pepe is described as “meek” (1). Therefore, the presence of Mamá Cielo in the novel is strongly felt, and in Marisol’s reconstruction of the life on the island before she was born, Mamá Cielo is the dominant parent in the stories; thus, one never reads of Papá Pepe’s house, but the house is invariably referred to as “Mamá Cielo’s house” (81, 131, 134, 135, 162, 166, 168, 217, 287). Mamá Cielo is thus the commander of home in charge of nurturing and providing shelter.

Mamá Cielo lives in ambiguity between the contradictory acts of protecting and disciplining her children, making home a site where shelter is as vividly lived as violence. She is a protective and furious mother who is not willing to “spare the rod” (1) in order to raise her children within the Catholic value system. Thus, disciplining her children requires exemplary punishments. As an example, Marisol writes about an incident of Ramona’s youth:

> Guzmán's sister, my mother, has scars on her knees from one of her mother's unique methods of punishment. For talking with a boy in town while on an unescorted errand, the twelve-year-old girl had been made to heel on a tin grater for an hour. She said she had difficulty washing the dry blood off it in time to grate the green bananas for making *pasteles* that night. She also remembers that when she awoke the next morning her legs were sticky with the aloe Mamá grew in her kitchen. (2)

Mamá Cielo's protective character transforms into violence in her cruel ways seeking to correct her children's behaviors. In the passage above, Ramona's respectability as a future marriageable pure Catholic woman is in jeopardy; therefore, Mamá Cielo intervenes to guard the purity and virginity of her daughter. Thus, Mamá Cielo takes measures to assure the reputation of Ramona and the family by penalizing her daughter's wrongdoing. Mamá Cielo´s methods of protection look as if to be offering security to her family; however, while security signifies shelter and comfort, these characteristics are erased by Mamá Cielo's violent proceedings. Home becomes a place of fright that needs to be escaped from (George 9). The Vivente home ambivalently produces a sense of safety and vulnerability.

If the Vivente home is viewed within a bigger scale, Martin and Mohanty's idea of regarding communities as homes is useful to reveal the negative aspects of Salud. Geographically, Salud is located near Mayagüez, which according to the novel's description is the nearest city where people from Salud go to run official errands, visit big stores, and take the bus to travel to the capital city, San Juan. In contrast, Salud is a small town surrounded by natural landscapes, and whose people depend on agricultural production for self-consumption and job opportunities (most men labor in the Central, the sugar refinery). Therefore, Salud is mainly an agrarian town far from the capital. The silence of the novel regarding the island's and Salud's

government can be understood as the political and economic negligence towards an area, whose inhabitants in turn might lack educational and diverse job opportunities. However, the rural landscape and the abundance of the fruits of the land are a strong component when creating the idea of a home community for Salud's inhabitants, who in diaspora remember heartily their community's natural landscape.

Using the demographical level as proposed by Martin and Mohanty, it can be said that Salud is an ethnically homogeneous population. Almost all inhabitants are Puerto Ricans, with the exception of Mr. Clement, the American, his wife, and the Spanish Don Juan Santacruz (Rafael's father). Therefore, the population in Salud shares a common heritage and traditions. Salud can be best described with a saying in Spanish: "Pueblo chico, infierno grande." This statement is literally translated as "small town, big hell," and can be explained to mean the smaller the town, the bigger the gossip. Salud's inhabitants are all up to date on what happens to their neighbors. Gossip in a home community gives a sense of togetherness, and thus keeping track of the population's doings is a mechanism to control inclusions and exclusions in a home community.

A gossipy town is not a particularly comfortable place to live in when one is the object of rumors. Therefore, Salud as a home community fails to provide safety to everyone, and turns into a threat to the person who becomes an object of gossip. Marisol writes about two incidents that affect her own family. The first involves Carmelo (Marisol's uncle) and his friend Padrecito (little priest) César. After the priest's arrival, "Carmelo soon became César's confidant" (18); they spend a lot of time together leading to the rumor of an illicit homosexual relationship between the two.

As a matter of fact, the rumor goes around town where "Carmelo could not walk down the street without some shiftless person calling out to him that his trousers were too tight in the

crotch or that his cologne could be smelled for miles and that if he didn't take care dogs would confuse him for a bitch in heat" (52). Salud as a home community uses an inclusion/exclusion pattern, to use George's terms (9); the home community is not a place that welcomes everyone, but a closed place that excludes and ostracizes transgressors. In this case, Carmelo with his non-heteronormative sexuality is made an object of mockery and of intervention of deviance. Thus, the Holy Rosary Society, the guardian society of the Catholic values of Salud, asks for Padrecito César to be removed and sent away. After César's abrupt departure, Carmelo lies about his age and joins the army (52), finding an escape from the home community where he has been rejected and derided, choosing to flee and join an institution that is considered to be the epitome of masculinity.

Salud as a home community proves to be imaginarily safe; protection is only offered and guaranteed to those who do not transgress. In the following passage, Mamá Cielo reflects on Carmelo's sudden abandonment of home and his subsequent death:

> Carmelo – handsome and sensitive, forced to leave his home because of the evil minds that could only see that he was different from the other young men – killed in another's man's war. She felt in her heart that people like Doña Tina had killed Carmelo. (85)

The reassuring nature of the home community is contradicted with Carmelo's case. Home becomes a psychologically violent place that he is compelled to escape. Thus, home does not accept or welcome the difference. The other is seen to jeopardize the normal state of affairs within the home community; in this case the dominant Catholic values and heteronormative sexuality.

The second story Marisol writes about is La Cabra's. Pura Rosa's unacceptability by the people of Salud illustrates the exclusive nature of the home community. Rosa's return home

brings into question its safety and comfort. Rosa, as Carmelo, is a character that represents liminality, to use Socolovsky's words (110), in her transgression of Salud's morality with her "indecent" life style. Rosa is an independent, autonomous, and unmarried woman, who lives on her own working as a renowned spiritist in her valley where "women went to her to have their futures told, and for potions that she sold to cure almost any female trouble" (20). As popular as she is among women as a healer, she is also famous among men and women equally for being a prostitute. However, she is not associated with any procurer, but rather receives visits of males at her own place. In the following passage, Marisol writes about Mr. Clement's visit, witnessed by Carmelo:

> Two figures were running toward the river. One ran like a graceful animal tossing a white dress over her head […] The other runner was a heavy man […] Carmelo recognized him at once as the American, Mr. Clement […] But where was his brother [Guzmán]? Had this crazy woman done something horrible to him? Was she really a witch, as some people in town claimed, or just another whore, as she appeared to be now? (41)

Rosa does not follow the Catholic model in which sexual relations take place only within the marriage. In the novel Mr. Clement's married status is revealed (140), leaving Rosa as the illicit lover who interferes with the holy Catholic sacrament of marriage. Furthermore, Rosa's list of "improper" acts is completed with the affair she and Guzmán's have. The shared perception of Rosa as a prostitute gains two more unwanted characteristics: she becomes a cradle robber and a corrupter. Therefore, Rosa's life style does not match the prescribed one by the home community, and it is seen as a threat to the moral principles of Salud. Thus, the Holy Rosary Society intervenes and exiles Rosa from Salud, proving that institutions at home communities function as disciplining mechanisms and exclusion devices for transgressors. As Martin and Mohanty put it,

the differential experience of home by different members of the community challenges the homogeneity that home evokes (196).

Martin's and Mohanty's final level for analysis of home communities is architecture. Salud is a rather small place, and thus there are few buildings within town. However, people in Salud are familiar with four architectural spaces: the church, the Central, the plaza, and the Domino Hall. The first three physical structures evidence struggles of race and class, whereas the fourth demonstrates the spatial segregation that men and women live by, strengthening gender behavior codes and expectations. First, in the chapter called "SALUD!" The reader is informed of the church's construction process during colonial times:

> [a] church was concrete proof of God's presence, even among heathens. As long as there were Indians left, labor was cheap, even free. Within a decade the magnificent cathedral-like church of Our Lady of Salud was completed. (46)

This passage refers to the colonial times when the Spaniards settled in Puerto Rico, spreading the Catholic faith and using the natives as the main source of labor. While the Spaniards established their cultural hegemony, the native population was forced to become submissive and do what they were ordered. What in the future was to become Salud's most important construction was built upon an enslaved community that ultimately was extinguished. Thus, the church in the community "witnessed and obscured" (Martin and Mohanty 196) a race struggle.

The Central, its fields, and the plaza are spaces and buildings that evidence the intersection of race and class differences in a colonial setting. At the Central and its fields, Puerto Rican laborers are employed under poor working conditions. The following passage tells a story from the fields:

> [s]omeone named Jésus has passed out on the job that morning. When they removed his shirt to let him cool off, they had seen horrible open sores all over his

> back. They knew at once the sores had been caused from leaks in the cylinder that he had strapped on his shoulders to manually fumigate the field the previous day. The American had introduced this economical new system. A crop-duster airplane cost a bundle to run and it wasted chemicals over unused land. Manual dusting could be done by the men themselves in shifts, and nothing was wasted. (11)

Salud has moved on from free Native American labor to cheap Puerto Rican labor. Both have historically benefited another party through the subservience of the local population, upon whom, disadvantaged working conditions have been imposed through the pressure of colonialism. Thus, Salud's sugar refinery and fields evidence the economic struggle of a people who have been subjected to introduced economic systems, from which they are, at the same time, the engine, and the lowest rank. As the passage shows, the American boss is not interested in the well-being of his workers, but in reducing expenses even at the risk of putting in danger the life of the Puerto Rican laborers.

The presence of the American Mr. Clements in Salud confirms the American occupation of Puerto Rico, and the continuity of Spanish colonialism under the tutelage of a different nation. In the Spanish colonial times, Indigenous people were enslaved based on the ideology of superiority of the Spaniards; on the other hand, the American occupation and its working system in Salud evokes the inequality between Puerto Rican and American born citizens.

The plaza, the main square of Salud, is the site for the lottery to be carried out. This is a selection system of Puerto Rican laborers, who will be transported to work in the crop fields of the mainland; the government or private agencies pay for the transportation fee. This congregation place witnesses the struggle of people from Salud to emerge out of poverty and live the American Dream. However, to live that life means to be chosen first in the lottery. Opportunities are not offered equally to all Puerto Ricans; the lottery makes life improvement a

matter of chance, and not a right. Furthermore, the lottery's origin reveals a differential treatment between Puerto Rican born and American born citizens. The following passage tells the lottery's beginning:

> [t]he lottery had begun during President Truman's administration to help bring cheap labor to the growers on the mainland and to aid the Island's unemployment problem after the return of the soldiers from the Korean War. The population had exploded, and jobs other than those connected with the sugar refinery were very scarce. (149)

The paragraph above provides a historical period for the final section of the first part of the novel: 1945, the beginning of the Truman administration, and some time after 1953, its end, which coincides with the end of the Korean War. As stated in section 1.4, Puerto Rican History and Diaspora, Puerto Ricans were declared American citizens in 1917; however, in the passage above, they are conceived of as people who will provide the mainland economy with cheap labor, not as citizens with the same rights and possibilities as the American white population. When Marisol questions how the members of the diasporic home community of El Building put so much effort in the *Santería* event, she writes, "Did they really believe there were spirits and demons out there in the dark who helped or hindered them? Or was this all just fantasy-making, an escape from the dreary cycle of factory work, tenement living, second-class citizenship?" (261-2). In the second question, Marisol echoes the term used by Whalen, with which American citizenship is thought of as second-class (25) when it refers to Puerto Ricans. This is Marisol's only explicit political reflection on the situation of the members of her diasporic community; however, she never answers the question directly in her narration. Another example of Puerto Rican second-class citizenship is Guzmán's stay in the labor camp. It proves that working conditions for Puerto Ricans, even in the mainland, are demeaning. As the novel puts it:

> [t]hough in his first letter to his parents Guzmán did not go into details, it was clear that once in the camp he was forced to labor in the strawberry fields for ten hours a day under the supervision of armed guards. For weeks he did not even know that he was in the vicinity of Buffalo, New York, working for an absentee grower who took little interest in how his managers got a labor force. (176)

Guzmán's forced labor exile is the story of many other Puerto Ricans who expect that the odds are on their side when trying to succeed in the United States. However, there are no governmental mechanisms that control the working conditions of Puerto Ricans. The plaza witnesses the process of selection, and also the inequality that this selection establishes between Puerto Rican born citizens. In addition, it witnesses how the inequality transcends to differentiate Puerto Rican and American born citizens. Therefore, the plaza sees how paradoxical the selection is: it seems to be an improvement of life quality, but it only offers a blind forced labor contract that limits the laborers' freedom.

Finally, the domino hall is a building that witnesses the segregation of men and women, strengthening the traditional gender roles and expectations. The novel describes the place as a "bar where men drank rum and played games for money. Very few women went into the place" (50). Thus, the domino hall is a mainly male occupied space, and women who enter it are transgressors of the gender behavior codes in Salud. La Cabra as the main transgressor in the novel, to use Socolovsky's words (110), enters the hall dressed "in a tight red dress, with high heel shoes and her hair piled up" (50); women, "good women," are not expected to go in the hall, and much less dressed provocatively. Furthermore, the activities carried out in the hall are associated with male only entertainment. In the novel, men drink alcohol, gamble, and watch cockfights; all these activities confirm their manhood, and their involvement in them prove them as machos. Men show their dominant, strong, and violent character, and their intolerance towards

alleged offenses in the hall. In the following passage, Marisol writes a description of the activities and the behavior of the men in the hall:

> There must have been a fight earlier; the concrete steps were still wet from when they had been washed clean of blood. Someone always had a blade or machete ready. At least once a month there was a serious injury from a gambling fight, yet hardly ever did anyone complain to the authorities. Gambling was a man's personal business, and the ensuing fights were matters of honor between two men. (117-18)

In the hall, the men display their physical strength, proving themselves to be the violent and commanding sex. They do not let offenses pass unchallenged; instead, they defend against any affront directed to their honor, their glory, or reputation as men, and react violently in order to uphold their manhood and macho status.

If women are not welcome in the hall it is because they are conceived as the opposite of men. Thus, women are soft, nurturing, nonviolent, and submissive. However, it is a matter of location. In the hall women represent the opposite of men and in that way men are able to be machos in all their extension; outside the hall some women are powerful and rough, and they do not need physical violence to prove their authority. For example, the Holy Rosary society members are able to control who is part of their community in Salud, they expel Padrecito César and Rosa from town, without the need of a knife or a gun; they just use the destructive power of the word. Therefore, the conception of women as defenseless beings works inside the hall to strengthen the idea that men are their women's and their own defenders. The hall policy of men only intensifies the gender characterization, and thus gender code behavior.

Doña Amparo, the hall owner, proves that the gender system in Salud is not rigid through her constant presence in the bar. In the novel, Doña Amparo, whose name in Spanish means

shelter, is called “the patrona” (122), the boss, and in her both traditionally assigned characteristics of men and women are found: she gives protection to people in Salud – at a cost – and is also powerful because of her financial affairs, her control of the hall and its visitors. As the novel puts it, “Doña Amparo, whose chair had been set up in the doorway so that no one could come in or leave without her knowledge” (122). In addition, she is also described as a “pagan idol” (123), something that opposes the Catholic religion through the worship of a god who is not the true one. With this image of idolatry she becomes a transgressor, to use Socolovsky’s term (110), an alternative god, because she acquires omnipotence and omnipresence. Furthermore, her power comes from the fact that she recognizes the behavior code for men and women in Salud, and draws advantage from it. The following lines show Doña Amparo’s pragmatic views on men’s behavior and her ways of intervention:

> Like sex, cockfighting was an activity that made men less cautious as spenders; it made them drink more of her beer and rum. If there was a fight, and if she had to intercede on a man’s behalf to keep him from being thrown in the Salud jail (or worse, from trouble with his wife), well then, that man was in Doña Amparo’s debt forever. (123)

Doña Amparo uses her understanding of the traditional gender system for her own profit and the prosperity of her hall. In addition, this understanding empowers her and differentiates her from the rest of the women in Salud, whose entrance into the hall is censored. In the hall, Rosa’s youthful thought that “[m]en are men, and they need their diversions” (32) is fostered. Because men were born men, their violent and commanding character derives from their physical strength, and the hall is the place where they can perform their given nature. Thus, women, nonviolent and submissive, must be banned from the place for machos. However, Doña Amparo’s behavior and

awareness of the gender logic in Salud contradict this alleged nature-given opposition between women and men.

Home in the homeland proves to be a mythical place. Salud is romanticized, and its ideality emerges from the harsh life conditions in diaspora. What is known represents safety in opposition to the unknown; however, the known home is unsafe and discriminatory. Using Martin and Mohanty's approach to home communities, Salud can be read in geographical, demographic, and architectural terms. Salud's natural surroundings and abundant crops contribute to the idealization of the home community, but its geographical distance from the capital or any city, turns its provinciality into a disadvantage when compared with other places in Puerto Rico. In addition, Salud's population share traditions and a heritage that makes them a homogeneous and close-knit community. Salud's closeness makes it a gossip town, where people, like Padrecito César or Rosa, who do not comply with the town's values are vulnerable and face expulsion by other members of their own home community. Finally, Salud's buildings witness inequality based on race, ethnicity, and also space segregation in order to maintain traditional gender roles. The church was built upon the slavery and the extermination of the Taíno Indians, the sugar fields and the plaza see the discrimination between Puerto Rican born and American born citizens, and finally the domino hall fosters the traditional gender logic of the macho. Finally, gossip, as a mechanism of population control, and gender role system are two cultural items that the diasporic community of El Building import to the mainland, which are used to maintain and regulate their own community.

3.3 New Home in the Mainland

Martin and Mohanty's analytical levels appeared useful to analyze the home community in the homeland. The same three levels, geography, demography, and architecture are used in this

section to think about the diasporic home community of El Building. In the second part of *The Line of the Sun*, these three components are of main importance because they provide information about the diasporic home community that the Santacruz-Vivente family inhabits. This section considers the geographical location where the Santacruz-Vivente family lives on the mainland, namely, Paterson New Jersey. It also examines the relationship between African Americans and Puerto Ricans in order to provide a demographical reading. Finally, the architectural interpretation is given through the analysis of the use of space in the flats and the communal areas in El Building.

The Santacruz-Viventes live in Paterson, New Jersey. In the narrative, Rafael Santacruz selected this location: "Rafael had decided that New York City was not a safe place for his young wife and daughter" (169). The danger that the big city represents for his family is addressed by choosing a small town, still close to the main entry point for Puerto Ricans to the mainland, from which he had heard through his cousin. The presence of a relative in town gives Rafael the security that his wife and children will be among familiar faces while he is out on duty. Rafael's decision making regarding the selection of his family settlement shows that decisions concerning the family are the responsibility of the breadwinner. The confirmation of this gender role function is confirmed by his future fixed resolution of moving the family out of El Building, which is resisted by Ramona until the fall of the place. Ramona's resistance is shattered by the flames that consume the apartment building after the *Santería* event, when she reluctantly and apathetically surrenders to her husband's long-time desire to move to the suburbs. Furthermore, Ramona's longstanding resistance shields her from the solitude and isolation that the suburbs represent; afterwards, she endures the life in the suburbs until she is freed by Rafael's death.

El Building, a name given to the building by its dwellers, is the place where the Santacruz-Vivente apartment is located. As mentioned in section 3.1, the tenement building is

mainly inhabited by Puerto Rican families, who rent their flats from Jewish landlords, while "[t]he white middle classes were moving out to the fringes" (177). The demographic description provided in the narrative discloses a population circumscribed in a racialized system in which the Jewish control the dwellings in town, and it is the white people who can afford to move to the suburbs. Thus, in this system the African Americans and Puerto Ricans share the space controlled by landlords, as well as their underprivileged economic condition. As mentioned in section 2.1, Kadiyoti states that African American and Puerto Rican narratives are located in urban places where both ethnic groups experience racial and class marginalization. That is the case in the neighborhood were El Building is located. Furthermore, the narrative suggests that the space to which the African Americans and Puerto Ricans are confined is one of rivalry. Marisol explains that competition is something normal in the different age groups. For example, between the children the friction is articulated through verbal intimidation: "black kids [were] shouting threats at us [Marisol and Gabriel] one day" (181). Furthermore, the contention is also physically violent, and mirrors the competition between African American and Puerto Rican adults:

> I recognized the laughter as I slid into the puddle of frigid water: it was Lorraine and her friends who had ambushed me. Lorraine was a black girl who had been my playmate in grammar school but had become, in the "normal" course of development for black and Puerto Rican kids in Paterson, my adversary. The hostility was not personal; even the children seemed to know this on an instinctive level. It was a reflection of the adult's sense of territorial and economic competition. The conversations we heard at home told us that jobs and places to live in were scarce for people like us, and if we didn't fight for them, black would get them. (207-8)

The competition for labor and settlement between the African Americans and the Puerto Ricans evidences the marginalization of these ethnic groups within the social context of the narrative. In addition, it is possible to locate other examples that show how both populations are controlled in Paterson by restricting their entrance to certain places and also by police control. Examples are found in the novel when Guzmán admits that the good hotels in Paterson are not for blacks or Hispanics (243), and when a dweller from El Building states that the major's fear of a strike has resulted in systematic police surveillance of African American and Puerto Rican neighborhoods (245-6).

The demographic experience of home in the diasporic context of *The Line of the Sun* is related in accounts that involve mainly children or men. Kids' quarrels, which reflect the deprivation experienced by African American and Puerto Rican families, echo mainly a masculine problematic in the novel, this is, holding a job in order to provide for the wife and children. Even though the whole family has been put at a disadvantage because of the reduced or non-existent income, what these accounts show is that the economic power rests in the hands of the breadwinners, who in a traditional gender role community are men. Therefore, the demographic reading of home in El Building foregrounds the experience of men in diaspora and the constraints that unemployment brings upon them and their families. In the novel, it is not possible to find signs that indicate that men feel emasculated, inadequate, or mediocre because of their lack of work. This might be due to the privileged position from which the story is written, where Marisol and her family's needs are all covered for by the provider, Rafael, whose steady employment position produces a check each month without delay. However, the depiction of unemployed men serves to validate the traditional distinction between the public and private worlds inhabited by men and women respectively.

Inside El Building, women are in charge of the private realm, partly formed by the tangible structure of the flats. According to Toro-Morn and Alicea's study with Puerto Rican families, home is "the primary space where children were socialized into traditional Puerto Rican ways of living" (202). The apartments as a physical structure allow the experience of home, where the children of the first diasporic generation are presented and raised within the Puerto Rican modes of living. In El Building, families share staircases, hallways, and El Basement (171). These architectural features of El Building foster a close-knit community, in which sharing is as usual as fighting. As women pass the majority of their time in the apartments, they move in what Marisol calls "the ethnic beehive of El Building" (170). Furthermore, Marisol's description of El Building indicates that the main force behind the interaction within it is fuelled by women: "It was a microcosm of Island life with its intrigues, its gossip groups, and even it own spiritist, Elba, who catered to the complex spiritual needs of the tenants" (170). In the narrative, Marisol correlates gossip with women, and the forming of bonds among them is strengthened by daily visits to each other's apartments and group visits to the stores (174). Furthermore, in their time together women discuss their "expatriate condition," while romanticizing the life on the island (174). In El Building, gossip is also the driving force as it is in Salud, the home community of the Santacruz-Vivente in Puerto Rico. It was brought along by the diasporic community to foster the feeling of togetherness felt in the homeland. Gossip is a mechanism to control the population and also to exclude members of the community that have transgressed the social codes. In Salud, gossip leads to people expulsions out of town, while in El Building it leads to ignoring the presence of a community member. Therefore, the actions taken after a piece of gossip has circulated in the home community are more radical in the home community of Salud.

In El Building, the women choose to decorate their apartments with objects that emulate the customs on the island. Religious icons such as images of the Sacred Heart and the Virgin

Mary that adorn the walls of the tenements suggest the Catholic upbringing of the men and women on the Island, in which Hispanic women are expected to be more loyal and pious than men. The first part of the novel is evidence of this difference. Many of the episodes in Salud show women in church or in conversations with the priest, and in the meantime the stories about the men are set in the cane fields and the domino hall. Likewise, the women in the diasporic community of El Building attend mass in Spanish (174), while the men use El Basement as a gambling site at night (182). The gendered space segregation is an imported custom from Puerto Rico. It echoes the traditional gender role system on the island, and it also sustains Puerto Rican gender role codes in the mainland.

The home diasporic community of El Building is maintained through the preservation of cultural imported items such as gossip and the use of space within El Building. Gossip regulates inclusion and exclusions in the new home community, and women again control and autonomy through this mechanism. Moreover, women recreate the Catholic values of the island with the decoration on the flats' walls. In addition, the flats function as a site to educate children in the Puerto Rican values. The communal area, El Basement, shows how men and women use space differentially, maintaining alive the traditional gender system from Puerto Rico. Therefore, it is possible to say that the influence of imported traditions from the homeland enable the survival of the diasporic home community in the racial divide homeland context.

3.4 Female Experience of Diaspora and Home

This section discusses the experience of three female characters in the novel: Rosa, Ramona and Marisol. The experience of diaspora and home of these characters is different because it moves from disappointment, impossibility of adjustment, and further assimilation into American society. In section 3.4.1, Rosa's experience of diaspora is shown to be difficult and lonely. In addition,

her belonging to multiple private homes and home communities is examined. Section 3.4.2 discusses Ramona's and Marisol's differential experience of diaspora: Ramona's desire to maintain her position in the diasporic home community of El Building, and Marisol's longing for a home located outside of it, that is, in an American home community.

3.4.1 Rosa

Pura Rosa's experience of diaspora is marked by difficulty and disappointment. In Marisol's reconstruction about the life on the island in the first part of the novel, she discloses the details of Pura Rosa's life. Rosa moves to New York City when she is fourteen years old; she is sent there to be separated from a married man she falls in love with (30) and whose baby she carries. Rosa's homeland home is not a site where she finds protection and support, instead she is ostracized and sent away. An unmarried woman with a child from an illicit relationship must be punished for her unacceptable behavior as a Catholic woman; therefore, her arrival and installation on the mainland is the consequence of her breaching the social code established for women in a traditional Catholic home and home community, where the unacceptability of giving birth to a child outside the sacred institution of marriage is condemned through ostracism and constrained by continuous control. Therefore, home in the homeland for Rosa is not a neutral place (George 9), and proves to be a site for exclusion.

In her new home in New York, Rosa's brother subjects her to unceasing surveillance, while her home in the homeland is continuously present through the letters of her mother, which contain "sermons of damnation" (30). Therefore, Rosa's move to mainland cannot be characterized as a new beginning, in Brah's terms (193), but as an imposed journey that does not let go of the past. Rosa does not experience the hope that living in diapora might mean, instead

she is trapped in an unsupportive traditional home on the mainland that echoes the homeland home in its intolerance and rejection.

George asserts that occasionally home is a place to escape from (9), and for Rosa that is the case. To escape the coercion she experiences at her New York home, Rosa finds a job as a laborer in a factory. Earning her own money would provide her with autonomy; however, she trades the possibility of self-government with a paycheck for another extramarital relationship with her boss at the factory. To find the safety of home elsewhere, Rosa moves to an "apartment her boss found her" (30). After the failure of this relationship, Rosa decides to look for a job in order to move out "on her own" (31). Rosa is not able to set free from the restrictions of a patriarchal system that rules that men offer security to women. Thus, she leaves her brother in order to find the prescribed protection with another man. Later, she figures out that being on her own home might result safer. The seeds of an idea of living at the margin of the social expectations for women are planted in Rosa's mind at the moment she realizes that her mother would never stop considering her a lost soul, since the only way she would allow Rosa to return home would be if she accepts to have her "bastard child" (31) adopted.

In her search of autonomy, Rosa comes across a spiritist called El Indio (The Indian). El Indio offers her protection and safety in a spiritist meeting, where he says to her: "promise to serve me all the days of your life, and you shall never be alone again" (32). The avoidance of isolation, and the security Rosa finds in the words of this new man, leads her to accept a position as an assistant in his meetings, which includes an offer of a place to live in. However, his offer comes with an imposition. The alleged safety granted by El Indio and the home he offers include that he becomes her pimp without her consent. Rosa's search for protection under the wing of men leads her to experience abuse and control over her body. On the mainland, Rosa's intention to avoid her own subordination brings her to experience a deep subservience supported by her

traditional upbringing and her yearning for safety in a place she can call home. Rosa's experience of multiple homes in the homeland and on the mainland is characterized by exclusion, insecurity and exploitation. Martin and Mohanty's idea of "being home" (196) is what Rosa seeks; while she moves from one place to another, she desires a place where she would be able to live within a safe, protecting and familiar environment. However, what she finds during her journey from homeland to diaspora is "not being home," because she experiences in her own flesh that the unity of home is based on the exclusion of some people from its security and their subsequent vulnerability.

After Rosa's experience on the mainland she returns to the island, where she becomes a transgressor of social codes and expectations. Rosa lives on her own in her mother's house in the valley. She establishes her own safe familiar place in the land that belonged to her coercive mother, upon which she has full control of. Rosa is still an unmarried woman, who lives from the money that she receives for spiritual counseling and potions. Rosa's autonomy given by her self-employed and independent way of living is punished with rumors in town. Furthermore, because she has no special commitment to any man, but maintains voluntarily transactional relationships with many, she is disdained in town.

As mentioned above, Rosa transgresses the female social expectations of the home community in two ways. First, she does not comply with the moral code that rules that a woman should be married to a man, who provides for the family. Rosa provides for herself and for her daughter, doing the best she can to live as a single mother in a town where premarital sex is the dishonor of a woman, and the birth of illegitimate children is the talk of the town. To keep Sarita away from the malicious talk, Rosa enrolls her in a Catholic boarding school far from Salud. This choice restores Rosa's own ambiguity towards the patriarchal system in which she was brought up. On the one hand, she finds autonomy in her alternative, though despised by the town, life

style. On the other, Rosa provides a traditional Catholic education for her daughter, which teaches her daughter to be pious and to comply strictly with the Catholic sacraments by which the home community lives. Therefore, the purpose of Sarita's education is to produce a well-adjusted individual for the home community and the traditional values it adheres to, and thus to give her daughter the "being home" feeling Rosa never had. However, the other side of this adjustment is to maintain the subservient naturalized state that women have under traditional Catholic tutelage, which Rosa has tried to avoid at the expense of losing the opportunity to feel at home.

In her alternative ways Rosa challenges the norms of the home community. Her final immoral act in town is to fall in love with and lodge Guzmán in her house. The outrage that this forbidden love creates is heard everywhere in Salud. Guzmán, though the black sheep of his family, is the son of a respectable mother in the community; he is too young. In the novel, the conversation between Padre Gonzalo, the Holy Rosary and Doña Julia emphasizes the allegedly good character attributed to Mamá Cielo, as well as the apparently corrupting evil character of La Cabra,

> Poor woman, poor martyred mother [Mamá Cielo]. And now Guzmán had been taken away from her by that woman again [Guzmán first stay at Pura Rosa's place at the age of 14]. They say the two of them live in that house by the Red River. A woman old enough to be his mother. (80-1)

To counteract Rosa's misdeed, the Holy Rosary Society, a Catholic organization formed by married women that safeguards morals in town, in other words, seeks to protect the preferred values of the home community. In the following passage, Doña Tina, the leader of the society, explains to Mamá Cielo the aim of their resolution: "[t]he society has decided, with Don Gonzalo's blessing, of course, to do something permanent about this disgraceful woman who is endangering so many souls in our town of Salud" (85).

After informing Guzmán's mother, Doña Tina and Doña Corina part on their exile mission. As Salud's good morals representatives, they will exclude and unwelcome anybody who threatens their home community. They announce themselves to Rosa by saying, "Come out and face us. Or are you afraid of what two decent women have to say to you?" (100). The indecency of Pura Rosa needs to be corrected by women who know how to be respectable; the Holy Rosary will penalize the transgressor of social codes. Therefore, women who challenge the patriarchal and Catholic system are unwelcome. Moreover, it is women themselves who take into their hands the defense of the Catholic ethics and the traditional gender expectations in the hometown of Salud, making it an exclusive place for those who comply with them. Rosa's return home ends once more with ostracism, but this time the exile becomes permanent for her.

Rosa's experiences exemplify the exclusive nature of home and home community. She embodies the transgressor of norms and codes; therefore, she endures ostracism and ultimately exclusion. Rosa's life experiences demonstrate that traditions such as religion and gender role system are strong in the homeland. In the novel, these traditions remain powerful in the diasporic community; they contribute to the regulation and the maintenance of the home away from home. Finally, it can be also concluded that women in the homeland strongly contribute to the reproduction of these traditions. Therefore, first generation women in diaspora echo the homeland women's role in the maintenance and the regulation of the home community.

3.4.2 Ramona and Marisol

Bolaki suggests that there are "generational and linguistic differences" between mothers and daughters living in diaspora. This is the case in the novel, where Ramona and Marisol's generational differences influence their experience of diaspora and home in diaspora. Furthermore, Ramona is still very close to the home and homeland left behind, and, in Brah's

terms, her experience of dislocation and displacement is recent, and so is the understanding and negotiation of the new cultural and social reality (196). On the other hand, Marisol arrived as a baby to the mainland, and thus every notion she has of Puerto Rico is based on the stories of her mother and the reenactment of the island's traditions in the diasporic community of El Building.

For Ramona, representing the first generation, diaspora is an experience of "loss and hope as a defining tension" (Clifford 257). As Ramona never manages to adapt to the ways of the mainland, she lives in a "constant rhapsodizing about that tropical paradise" (222) in order not to lose the feeling of familiarity that her home and her community on the island provided her. She maintains her hope by recreating along with other members of her community the lost home at El Building. In her recreation, she finds the lost comfort of the home in the homeland. Ramona and her female friends contribute to the maintenance and regulation of the diasporic community as their mother and other women did in the mainland, through the preservation of the Catholic faith and the traditional gender role system.

Ramona is attached to "a 'home' culture and tradition" that contains social patterns such as religion, speech, body, food, and dress codes (Clifford 259). She is a practicing Catholic, and she is also a follower of the alternative spiritual methods of the island, such as *Santería* and *mesa blanca*; she never learns to speak English, and Marisol acts as her interpreter (179, 273, 276); she believes in "day-by-day grocery shopping" (227); she dresses like an islander would, like a "gypsy" (206, 219). Ramona's choices to perform her identity are island related, even though she is not located on the island anymore. Therefore, her identification is based on "politics of motion," as it can be seen in her identification as a Puerto Rican outside of Puerto Rico, as well as "politics of belonging," which can be seen in her relation to her diasporic community and their shared identity (Schutermandl and Toplu 20). Consequently, out of Puerto Rico Ramona

maintains connections to her home community by choosing to perform Puerto Rican cultural identity, and thus secure her self-development.

Ramona performs a Puerto Rican cultural identity by reproducing a traditional female role at home, and by securing its "protective boundaries" (Martin and Mohanty 96). Therefore, Ramona is what Toro-Morn and Alicea call a "caretaker of the home and children" in charge of socializing her kids into the traditional Puerto Rican ways (33). Moreover, Ramona refuses to lose the safety that the diasporic community of El Building gives her. In the narrative, Rafael tries to convince her to move out to the suburbs but she is not willing to abandon the safety of the familiarity of El Building as a home community. As the novel puts it,

> Year after year Rafael, my father, would try unsuccessfully to convince Ramona to move away from El Building. We could have afforded it. With our assured monthly check from the navy, we were considered affluent by our neighbors, but Ramona harbored a fear of strange neighborhoods, with their vulnerable single-family homes sitting like eggs on their little plots of green lawn. Ramona had developed the garrison mentality of the tenement dweller that indicates that there is safety in numbers. (172)

Ramona fears the isolation that living in the suburbs generates. She does not care for the social mobility Rafael can afford, but for the safety she finds "there among others of her kind" (172). Furthermore, she recognizes how discordant her presence would be in the suburbs, and also the impossibility to perform at ease her cultural identity. For Ramona, to leave her home community in Paterson means the absolute loss of the safety of home and the end of hope. Nevertheless, Rafael insists on the move, trying to allure her with visits to neighborhoods with big houses. As Marisol puts it,

> He would take us for rides to Fairlawn, an affluent community where the doctors, lawyers, and other Paterson professionals lived. There was so much space, and you could even hear the birds. Mother glanced at the cold façades of the houses and shook her head, unable to imagine the lives within. (172)

Ramona is not willing to exchange the diasporic community for a life in the suburbs, surrounded by wealthy and educated people, not even though they would have a larger house to live in. The small flat in El Building suffices her because she knows that there she does not feel alone but home. At El Building, Ramona feels the coherence and the unity of home (Martin and Mohanty 196); she is an important member of the community, who many people rely on, and moving away means the loss of her privileged position within her home community in Paterson. In the narrative, Ramona has a fundamental role in the organization of the spiritist meeting, as Marisol mentions:

> Throughout all this Ramona remained at the control center, our apartment, directing the flow of traffic and sorting the stream of provisions that had turned her kitchen into a botanica, with candles of all colors and sizes lining the counters, flowers in the sink, gallons of agua florida, as well as several cans of lighter fluid for the flame that would give all the untranquil spirits light that night. (254-5)

Ramona has found in the home community of El Building an important role. In Clifford's words, she deals with the spiritual insecurities of exile in El Building (259), and participates actively in the rituals organized by the women, which look for the peace of the spirits and the maintenance of hope in exile.

However, with the fall of El Building and the disintegration of its diasporic community after the fire in the *Santería* event, the Santacruz-Vivente family is left without a dwelling, and the resolution to move to the suburbs is taken. Ramona loses the safety of home in the diasporic

community, and her fear of loneliness and discomfort of a life in the suburbs materializes. In the novel, Marisol narrates how she and her father set up the home in the suburbs:

> Rafael had used all of his leave time to set up the house for her. He had bought furniture and appliances on the installment plan, and he had given me the job of paying the bill so that Ramona could enjoy her new life in the suburbs without worry. With the help of a Sears catalogue, we had color-coordinated everything: curtains, sheets, throw rugs, and cushions matched in the best middle-class American taste. Though it was a pleasure for me to set up this house in the soothing hues that appealed to my father and to me, I had a feeling that Ramona would feel like a stranger in it. (283-4)

As a matter of fact, she feels like an alien in that house. All of her efforts to maintain the "protected boundaries" (Martin and Mohanty 196) of her home in diaspora are erased by obtaining the title of middle-class family inhabiting the suburbs. Thus, this new house becomes a home that traps her, depriving her from the protection that the company of other Puerto Ricans has offered her, removing her from her new role as a community healer. For Ramona, the new home is uninspiring, and brings with it loneliness and isolation until the death of Rafael, which "allow[s] her to return to her beloved Island" (286). Only then is Ramona able to return to her original and familiar home community.

On the other hand, Marisol's experience of diaspora proves the construction of a transcultural identity based on her multiple alliances and affiliations (Beck qtd. in Arapoglou et al. 3). The configuration of her identity emerges from hybridity, the practices she sees at home, and in the rest of the American society. Marisol is called by one of the neighbors "Americanita," and when he does so he establishes a difference between the Americanized girl and women like her mother, Ramona, women who have spent a long period of time on the island before coming

to the mainland. In the following passage, Marisol transcribes his neighbor's, Santiago's, words when she says to him that they should warn women about the spiritist meeting in the turbulent time of the strike:

> No, you should know this about Island women, not little Americanitas like you […] but women who are brought up to believe that we are not alone in this vale of tears and misery that is a human life. They believe that we have invisible friends, these spirits of theirs, who are supposed to be loyal dogs, summoned with a whistle, to come help us and defend us from our enemies. They mean well, but here in America their hocus-pocus only complicates things. (246)

Santiago acknowledges that women from the first diasporic generation are different from their daughters. They trust that the ways of the island will work on the mainland. The daughters representing the second diasporic generation have only experienced the island vicariously or in recreations. On the other hand, they are familiar with the American way; they see it at school or on the streets. Thus, the word "Americanita," from the English American and the diminutive suffix 'ita' in Spanish that means little in the feminine ending, evidences their hybrid identity and their affiliation with both the mainland and the island societies. In addition, it also indicates their Americanization.

The in-betweenness is also experienced by the generation of first diasporia. However, in the novel there is no evidence of a potentially hybrid nonconformist identity. The women of the first generation "perform their identity," to use Silva's et al. terms, through their conscious decision to perform an identity that features particular cultural characteristics (Silva et al. 4), this is, they emulate the life in the island. Therefore, women of the first diasporic generation in the novel choose Puerto Rico as their main alliance, and its traditions as the cultural codes to be maintained and practiced within the diaspora.

Marisol's hybrid identity is connected to her adolescent years and its fluctuations. Thus, she is trapped in her in-betweenness, and in a rush to confirm her American affiliations. However, she is unable to do so, and as Magnani points out, Marisol does not manage to reconcile her cultural heritages. Thus, the redefinition of identity in creative ways is for Marisol a matter of choosing between one side and the other, instead of merging elements from different cultural systems. Marisol mentions that

> [a]t thirteen, I was being counseled in humble acceptance of a destiny I had not chosen for myself: exile or, worse, homelessness. I was already very much aware of the fact that I fit into neither the white middle-class world of my classmates at Saint-Jerome's nor the exclusive club of El Building "expatriates." (177)

Marisol wishes that she could change her home community, that its members were not the like urchins and hoodlums that reside in her neighborhood. In the following lines, Marisol's yearning to be accepted as part of another home community is evident: "I wanted more than anything to believe that people like the Rosellis could accept me as their own" (189). She wishes to be part of that home community of the suburbs, to be surrounded by educated people, to be a middle-class American. Even though she sometimes wishes she had grown up in Puerto Rico (222), because of her mother's constant mention of the mythical home, she acknowledges that "[t]he smells and sounds of a lost way of life could only be a parody" (223). Marisol accepts that the loss of the familiarity of home cannot be retrieved, much less relived, through the diasporic experience. Toro-Morn and Alicea affirm that the second generation diaspora children dismiss homeland culture (194), and Marisol certainly has a hard time embracing her Puerto Rican heritage.

By the end of the novel, Marisol admits that the home she wants is not the mythical home of her mother. She chooses her alliance and the identity she wants to perform, acknowledging at

the same time the burden of her Puerto Rican heritage. Marisol writes, "I would always carry my Island heritage on my back like a snail, I belonged in the world of phones, offices, concrete buildings, and the English language" (273). Marisol yearns for the American life style, and unlike her mother, she feels safe and content in the new house in the suburbs. This suggests that Marisol will partly find the assimilation of American society and culture she longs for by belonging to a different home community and locating her private home outside the diasporic community of El Building.

Section 3.4 has shown that the diasporic experience of women in the novel is markedly dissimilar. For Rosa it is a lonely exile that reminds her the expulsion of her home in the homeland, while for Ramona and Marisol it is gregarious experience in which they participate constructing home away from home. However, the attitudes of the mother and the daughter towards the home community vary. Ramona is pleased with her position in the home community and participates in its maintenance and regulation. On the other hand, Marisol wishes to belong to a different home community, an American one, in order to feel at home away from the barrio life.

4. Conclusion

This study has discussed Judith Ortiz Cofer's *The Line of the Sun* and interpreted the novel by using the concepts of diaspora and home. The community of El Building is identifiable as a diaspora under the list of criteria proposed by Safran. Most principles in the list are met. The inhabitants of the diasporic community of El Building believe that home in the homeland is a mythical place, many of them want to return to the island, their relationship with the host community is tense, and they use traditional institutions, such as family, traditional gender system, and *Santería*, to maintain their sense of distinctiveness. However, one of the principles is not met. The members of the diasporic community are not committed to the restoration of the homeland. Thus, they are not concerned with Puerto Rico's and Puerto Ricans' political situation. This does not eliminate the identification of El Building as a diasporic community, but it influences in the perception of the novel as an apolitical.

On the basics of Clifford's notion of differential experience of diaspora, it is possible to conclude that men and women in the novel live diaspora as stipulated by the traditional gender roles. Women are in charge of home, while men are the breadwinners; the study used Clifford's terms of placement and displacement respectively. However, the roles in the novel are not completely stable due to the larger context of the novel, where Puerto Rican men are the first to be fired of their jobs, and thus unable to fulfill their role as economic providers. On the other hand, women experience a great deal of movement within the home community of El Building, and regulate it using gossip as a mechanism of exclusion and inclusion; in addition, women become responsible for the spiritual needs of the community. *Santería* events and gossip give women autonomy inside the new home community.

As diaspora is a means to establish a home away from home, the remembrance of the home in the homeland plays a significant part in the reenactment of behavioral codes and

accepted conducts of diaspora members. In the analysis of the novel, the study of the original home and home community served to demystify the mythical character attributed in the collective or individual recollections of diaspora members. The private home of the Vivente family is a site that moves ambivalently between violence and protection. On the other hand, Salud as a home community is proved to be an exclusive place whose buildings have witnessed racial and ethnic struggles. Furthermore, Salud does not welcome people who do not comply with the conservative and catholic values professed by the majority of the population. In addition, the study of the home community in Puerto Rico revealed that women play a significant role in the regulation of the community.

In the diasporic home community of El Building, many conducts and cultural codes imported from the homeland, such as gender roles, gossip, and the *Santería* events are maintained. In addition, women emulate the island women's conduct by using gossip in a similar fashion. It is a mechanism that permits the exclusion of members of the community that transgress acceptable conducts. However, in the homeland the outcome of the exclusion is much more radical, because it includes expulsion. Moreover, women's network is an important mechanism that fosters gossip, but it also provides material and emotional support for the women in El Building.

The analysis of El Building as a home community shows the strained relationships that the Puerto Rican diasporic community holds with other segments of the population in Patterson. African American and Puerto Ricans compete for jobs and dwellings, while Jewish people are their landlords. On the other hand, white people moves far from the location of these communities, evidencing the marginalization of African American and Puerto Ricans in those sections of the city. Furthermore, the architecture of El Building with its shared staircases and communal spaces allows the formation of a close-knitted community.

Women's experience of home and home away from home in *The Line of the Sun* differs markedly. Rosa's experience of diaspora is traumatic, and she never manages to adapt to the homeland nor leave behind the bad memory of home in the homeland. In addition, Rosa's story proves the exclusive character of the home community in Salud through her expulsion. Ramona lives content in diaspora, and she finds an important position in it when she starts to participate in the big *Santería* event. However, the home she fears the most, one in the suburbs, becomes her reality after El Building burns down. Finally, Marisol feels that he home community she belongs to should be another one. She longs for assimilation, to become American, which is realized when the family moves to the suburbs. She does not think she belongs in the home community of El Building.

This study of *The Line of the Sun* has explored the constitution of diaspora as establishing a home away from home. The notion of home has proved to be useful to the analysis because it has permitted a double approach that takes into account the meaning of both, private home and home community. This reading shows that in Judith Ortiz Cofer's *The Line of the Sun* both spheres participate in the maintenance of diaspora through the reenactment of behavior and mechanisms imported from the homeland.

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