Spring 2011

La Concencia Mestiza Materialized: A Study of Judith Ortiz Cofer's Silent Dancing

Megan Frutiger
Bethel University

Megan Frutiger

Professor Mark Bruce

Senior Seminar

May 1, 2011

La Concencia Mestiza Materialized: A Study of Judith Ortiz Cofer's *Silent Dancing*

Stories tell me not only who I am but also who you are and what we are together. In fact, without you and your story I cannot know myself and my story. No one's story exists alone. Each is tangled up in countless others. Pull a thread in my story and feel the tremor half a world and two millennia away.
~ Daniel Taylor, *Tell Me a Story*

The swings to my left creaked as the Guatemalan sun beat down on the playground of a small private school. I was sitting on a concrete bench protruding from the wall outside of the kindergarten classroom. Cindi, four years old, sat on my lap, staring at me. "So white…" She whispered, "I wish that I could be as pretty as you".

I was speechless. What do you say to a precious kindergarten girl who has somehow already decided that it is more beautiful to have light skin and blonde hair than to have brown skin and black hair? I had never before been singled out because of my race, and was beginning to realize the extent to which people in Guatemala saw me differently than people did back home. In my hometown I was a white middle-class college student, but white was never really mentioned because the majority population was white. I was the daughter of teachers, a respectable but not exactly lucrative profession. In Guatemala I was a *gringa*, a rich white woman from the United States. I was a tourist, a teacher, and a missionary. I was seen differently than I had ever been before, and yet I myself had not drastically changed. My context had changed. This experience raised so many questions about identity. Who was I? How would I be able to reconcile the inconsistencies revealed by my cross-cultural experiences? And furthermore,

if I was asking these questions after living abroad for a mere six months, how did people who grew up in a bicultural context deal with these questions of identity?

In her creative nonfiction memoir *Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood,* Judith Ortiz Cofer demonstrates one way of dealing with these questions of bicultural identity. This creative work, Ortiz Cofer says, arose out of necessity, out of "a need to study [herself] and [her] life in retrospect; to understand what people and events formed [her]" (Cofer 11). Ortiz Cofer felt that she needed to revisit the stories of her childhood and remember the people who told them. It was listening to the stories her grandmother told "under the mango tree that [she] first began to feel the power of words" (Cofer 76). She desired to use this "power" to understand herself and her story as well as the stories of others. She "[was] not merely interested in canning memories" (Cofer 13). Ortiz Cofer, "wanted to try to connect [her]self to the threads of lives that have touched [hers] and at some point converged into the tapestry that is [her] memory of childhood" (Cofer 13).

This desire to examine her life and clarify her identity is not unique to Ortiz Cofer. However, her bicultural bilingual upbringing made this process more necessary. She was living on the margins of both Puerto Rican culture and mainland United States culture; she was a child of the in-between. Oritz Cofer continually experienced a *choque*, a clash of two disparate forces in the same being (Anzaldúa 100). This *choque* caused Ortiz Cofer to experience anxiety surrounding her identity. She could not really figure out who she was because she was so often adapting to who others expected her to be. In order to deal with this *choque,* Ortiz Cofer developed a new consciousness, *la conciencia mestiza.* According to Anzaldúa, convergent thinking and a tolerance for contradictions characterize this consciousness. Ortiz Cofer writes from this paradigm to create her memoir. She structures it in two contradictory ways: separating

moments of being by space and weaving stories together. She intertwines Anglo American and Puerto Rican American stories, as well as remembrances and revelations. Readers, through engaging this memoir, unconsciously adopt the *conciencia mestiza* from which it was written. They begin to see the threads that have "converged into the tapestry" of their own identities as contributions to a whole rather than random, often inconsistent, occurrences.

In order to fully understand the *choque* Judith Ortiz Cofer experienced and the *conciencia* revealed by her literary technique, it is important to consider her personal history. Ortiz Cofer was born in Hormigueros, Puerto Rico in 1952. When she was two years old, to support her family financially, her father enlisted in the United States Navy. Ortiz Cofer grew up moving back and forth between this Puerto Rican town and Patterson, New Jersey. Growing up in both the United States and Puerto Rico meant that Ortiz Cofer's childhood was full of many contrasting experiences. Experiencing the rich culture of both Puerto Rico and of the United States, learning two languages, and interacting with the people around her greatly impacted Ortiz Cofer. She writes,

> "As a navy brat, shuttling between New Jersey and the Pueblo, I was constantly made to feel like an oddball by my peers, who made fun of my two-way accent: A Spanish accent when I spoke English; and, when I spoke Spanish, I was told that I sounded like a 'Gringa'. Being the outsiders had already turned my brother and I into cultural chameleons." (17)

She and her brother learned to adapt to whatever cultural expectations were imposed upon them. However, this left Ortiz Cofer floating between the two cultures that were often contradictory rather than anchored or rooted in one. She experienced what author Gloria Anzaldúa describes as "*un choque*, a cultural collision" resulting from "the coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference" (Anzalduá 100).

In the face of such a collision, such a contradiction, Anzaldúa argues that we must refuse to accept dichotomies. If these dichotomies are accepted and each group reacts to the actions and ideas of the other "a counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked into

mortal combat, like the cop and the criminal, both are reduced to a common denominator of violence" (Anzaldúa 100). Frustration takes hold and one culture blames another culture for its struggles. This dichotomous view demands that one culture be right and one wrong, one dominant and one submissive. Ortiz Cofer must be Puerto Rican or American; she could not be both. Such a paradigm of thought would likely result in anger toward the dominant United States culture that refused to see Ortiz Cofer as American. Or perhaps the anger would be directed toward the Puerto Rican community that did not fully accept her when she returned to the Island. If anger were avoided altogether Ortiz Cofer would still be stuck in the in-between unable to articulate who she was or which culture she belonged to.

However, rather than looking at the world through a convergent lens which forces people to choose which side they will be on, which distinct category they will fit into, Anzaldúa purposes that people develop a new consciousness focused more intensely on divergent thinking. She defines this divergent thinking as "a movement away from set patterns and goals toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes" (Anzaldúa 101). She calls this new consciousness "*La Consciencia mestiza*" (Anzaldúa 101). "The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, and to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures" (Anzaldúa 101). This is exactly what Ortiz Cofer learned to do, to juggle both the cultural expectations of the mainland United States and those of the island Puerto Rico. Furthermore, Ortiz Cofer became comfortable with ambiguity and accepting of contradictions.

In light of this, it is no surprise that Ortiz Cofer's work was inspired by two very different women: Virginia Woolf and her grandmother. Woolf was the "only major woman writer [Ortiz Cofer] had heard 'speak' directly to [her] from the canon [she] was following in graduate school" (Doyal 4). Woolf informed and possibly catalyzed Cofer's fascination with memories. According to Woolf one's memories were often concentrated around "moments of being", intense emotional moments surrounded by the ordinary and often forgettable happenings that make up life. For Ortiz Cofer, many of these "moments of being" are "*cuentos*, the morality and

cautionary tales told by [her grandmother and] the women in [her] family for generations: stories that became part of [her] subconscious as [she] grew up in two worlds, the tropical island and the cold city, and which would later surface in her dreams and poetry" (Cofer 14). These *cuentos* and other significant "moments of being" surfaced as Ortiz Cofer was writing *Silent Dancing.* She unfolds them in exquisite detail, makes meaningful connections between seemingly contradictory ideas, and intentionally structures her stories to demonstrate the authentic search for identity.

Ortiz Cofer uses vivid details and sensory language to draw the reader into her story. She makes readers feel as if they are sitting in the New Jersey apartment, El Building, or under the Mango Tree in Puerto Rico listening to Cofer tell stories just as she once listened to her grandmother, Mamá, tell stories. Ortiz Cofer intricately describes the scenery of each place so that the reader can enter into that place with her. For example, the first chapter, "Casa" begins with a long detailed description of the path visitors would have to follow to get to Mamá's living room where the women of the family would be sitting on mahogany rocking chairs telling each other stories, meant to be overheard by the young girls, stories about what it meant to be a Puerto Rican woman (Cofer 14). These rocking chairs were family heirlooms, much like the stories that follow were. As readers follow Ortiz Cofer's narration it is as if they are walking down the path behind the house, through the garden, past the fresh white orchids, into the cool shaded living room, sitting down on the floor next to the young girls already there and listening in on Mamá's stories, or in this case, Ortiz Cofer's recollections of Mamá's stories embedded in stories of her own. This use of detail was also encouraged by her literary mentor, Virginia Woolf, who was known for observing little details and using vibrant language to describe "the rapid passage of events and actions; the slow opening up of single and solemn movements of concentrated emotion" (Woolf, "Moments" 19).

Ortiz Cofer further draws on Woolf as inspiration for the structure of *Silent Dancing*, which is itself a unique contradiction. In the preface Ortiz Cofer explains the structure by referencing Woolf's *A Sketch of the Past* "Many bright colours; many distinct sounds; some

human beings, caricatures; several violent moments of being, always including a circle of the scene cut out: and all surrounded by a vast space – that is a rough visual description of childhood. This is how I shape it; and how I see myself as a child…" (Woolf, "A Sketch" 13). This is the template Ortiz Cofer uses to shape her memoir. Each chapter is distinct from the one that precedes it and the one that follows it. They are not in chronological order, but rather each is a remembrance in and of itself. At the end of each chapter is a poem. These poems are separated from the chapters by physical space; they always begin on a fresh page. Despite the expectation held by some people that a story will be told from beginning to end, we do not experience our own stories that way. The moments that stand out to people are often those moments of strong emotion that Woolf articulates, and they are rarely recalled chronologically. The separation and somewhat disjointed presentation of Ortiz Cofer's recollections authentically conveys the experience of remembering childhood.

On the other hand, each of these distinct chapters is composed of many stories woven together. For example, the first chapter, *Casa,* as previously mentioned, begins describing Mamá's living room, and the women of the Ortiz family are sitting around listening to her tell stories. Ortiz Cofer is telling of her own past experience here sitting on the floor while Mamá braids her hair. This scenic introduction morphs into a discussion of Aunt Laura and the story of her upcoming wedding. From there it spills into the story that Mamá is actually telling, the story of María la Loca. Mamá begins, María la Loca, once a woman of 17 years old was pledged to be married. She was beautiful and excited to begin her new life. However, her husband left her standing at the alter. This rejection left her so destroyed that she eventually went crazy from grief. Much later although she was an old woman, she walked around town like a child delivering meat pies and humming. Everywhere she went the townspeople made fun of her. The story finishes and Ortiz Cofer jumps right into her own fascination with it. "María la Loca interested me, as did all the eccentrics and the 'crazies' of our pueblo. Their weirdness was a measuring stick I used in my serious quest for a definition of 'normal'" (Silent 17). After she recognizes the story's impact on her identity as a child, Ortiz Cofer shifts the focal point of the chapter again and again. The

story of María la Loca becomes so intertwined with Laura's story and Mamá's and her own that they cannot be separated. The juxtaposition of these incongruous structures, separation and coalescence, reveals Ortiz Cofer's *concencia mestiza,* her ability to hold two or more seemingly contradictory concepts as the same time. Furthermore, by structuring her remembrances in this way, Ortiz Cofer guides the reader through an authentic experience of memory. The reader experiences various "moments of being" along with Ortiz Cofer.

Another important aspect of the structure in *Silent Dancing* is the way Ortiz Cofer uses the story within a story. She uses it as a vehicle for revisiting painful memories at a distance so as to reflect on them without ripping old wounds open again and as a way to portray truths she never experienced first hand but has come to understand. For example, in the second chapter, "More Room" Ortiz Cofer invites the reader to explore her grandmother house; "like a chambered nautilus it has many rooms, yet is not a mansion" (Cofer 23). Mamá's "room is the heart of the house" (Cofer 23). "Mamá slept alone on her large bed, except for times when a sick grandchild warranted the privilege, or when a heartbroken daughter came home in need of more than herbal teas. In the family there was a story about how this came to be" (Cofer 26). It was said that early in their marriage, when Mamá would announce to grandpa that she was expecting to have a child, she "supposedly drew plans for another room" to be built onto their house (Cofer 27). Each time grandpa would add another room to the house to welcome the addition to their family and pacify Mamá's "renowned temper" which "grew like a monster along with a new belly" (Cofer 27).

After eight children Mamá knew she could not have more or her health would suffer and she would not be able to do the things she loved. "She would be a chronically ill woman, like Flora with her twelve children: asthma, no teeth, in bed more than on her feet" (Cofer 27) So, she told grandpa that they would need another room added onto the house. Grandpa, thinking that they were going to have another child complied with her wishes. However, "Mamá's belly did not grow" (Cofer 27). "Finally, an anxious Papá approached his wife to tell her that the room was finished and ready to be occupied. And Mamá, they say replied: 'Good, it's for *you*,'" (Cofer

28). “And so it was that Mamá discovered the only means of birth control available to a Catholic woman of her time: sacrifice. She gave up the comfort of Papá’s sexual love for something she deemed greater: the right to own and control her body, so that she might live to meet her grandchildren” (Cofer 28).

This story is funny. Mamá was witty, but how could Ortiz Cofer’s grandfather really be hoodwinked so easily? And yet, amidst the humor and light-hearted memories there are deeper themes being explored in this story. Mamá, like many Puerto Rican women of her time was subordinate to her husband socially, but also physically. Bearing children racked her body and forever changed her in ways that her husband would never have to experience. Ortiz Cofer never experienced what Mamá went through. She became a mother in a different time period and cultural context where other birth control methods were more acceptable. Still, she seems to understand the oppressive societal structure her grandmother lived under. Ortiz Cofer creates a soft, comfortable, slightly humorous tone by telling her grandmother’s story as a story, which she heard often as a child. She also focuses on the rooms in the house rather than vividly describing her grandmother’s physical deterioration or emotional struggle.

Cofer then presents this same narrative in a poem that follows the chapter. The poem is called “Claims”. It focuses more closely on her grandmother’s physical and emotional struggles. The poem reads,

> Last time I saw her, Grandmother/ had grown seamed as a Bedouin tent./ She had claimed the right/ to sleep alone, to own/ her nights, to never bear/ the weight of sex again, nor to accept/ its gift of comfort, for the luxury/ of stretching her bones./ She’d carried eight children,/ three had sunk in her belly, *náufragos*,/ she called them, shipwrecked babies/ drowned in her black waters./ *Children are made in the night and/ steal your days/ for the rest of your life, amen.* She said this/ to each of her daughters in turn. Once she had/ made a pact with man and nature and kept it./ Now like the sea,/ she is claiming back her territory. (29)

The tone here is slightly more commanding, and the images used are more powerful. While these qualities are characteristic differences between the genres of narrative and poetry, it is significant that Ortiz Cofer chooses to include a poem to retell the story. She includes the poem after the

chapter has ended. The reader interacts with this more abrupt presentation of the events only after they have encountered the story version blended with diplomatic reflections and a comic sensibility. These two artistic expressions are very different yet inextricably connected. They are funny and simultaneously poignant. Ortiz Cofer gently coerces readers into holding both of these in tension, into accepting the contradictions as one truthful experience. Her memoir is written out of a *conciencia mestiza,* and the reader must adopt this consciousness at least for the duration of *Silent Dancing.*

Ortiz Cofer further demonstrates the *conciencia mestiza* by breaking away from other dichotomous conceptions of reality. One dichotomy she breaks from is the understanding that great authors can be identified as participants in a specific canon. There comes a time for Woolf and Ortiz Cofer and other great writers when they recognize that the canon they grew up studying does not adequately address their own questions. “The fortunate awareness that the canonical voice is not their voice represents a pivotal moment for these women. It marks a return to their roots, to their gender, their class, their homes” (Kevane and Herdia 14). Ortiz Cofer, educated in the western canon, returns to her roots, to her memories, but she takes Virginia Woolf with her. Woolf provides a lens through which she can have another look at her past experiences. This juxtaposition is key. Ortiz Cofer creates a space where her grandmother and Woolf, a writer from the margins of the Western literary canon, can inform one another. These seemingly incongruent influences become co-contributors to Ortiz Cofer’s identity and conceptualization of herself.

Another paradigm Ortiz Cofer breaks from is the conception that the past and the present are distinct entities. In Ortiz Cofer’s childhood experience, the past was a distinct place she could escape to; she writes, “our gypsy lifestyle had convinced me, at age six, that one part of life stops and waits for you while you live in another for awhile – and if you don’t like the

present, you can always return to the past" (Cofer 51-52). However, at some point, this changes for her. As an adult, Ortiz Cofer begins to understand the past as something she can "get […] attached to so that [she] shall be able to live [her life] through from the start" (Cofer 13). By attaching herself to her past, she is better able to understand and accept her present. Her present identity is inextricably tied to her past identity, neither of which is concrete, but rather they are constantly being deconstructed and reconstructed. According to Virginia Woolf,

> The individual identity [is] always in flux, every moment changing its shape in response to the forces surrounding it: forces which were invisible emerge, others sink silently below the surface, and the past, on which the identity of the present moment rests, is never static, never fixed like a fly in amber, but as subject to alteration as the consciousness that recalls it. (Woolf, "Moments" 12)

The current consciousness of the one remembering the past effects how that past will be interpreted, framed, and understood. However, the past is potent; and despite being shaped by the present consciousness, it has the power to alter that consciousness, which will then distinguish the past in a new way.

This reciprocal process is indefinite. Ortiz Cofer illustrates it in the chapter "Tales Told Under the Mango Tree". She presents her past self, her present self, and her future self as different characters, different voices, and seamlessly waves them into one story. First, she gives a reader the concrete details of what happened when she was a child. She sat under the giant mango tree on a sunny day listening to Mamá tell her the *cuento* of María Sabida. The story was this. María Sabida was one of the most cunning women in the Pueblo. It was said that she "came into the world with her eyes open" (Cofer 69). She was "a beautiful girl with the courage of a man" (Cofer 70). One day a troop of thieves came into the pueblo. They were strong and many people feared them. However, María Sabida was not afraid, she tricked the leader of the thieves. She made him a soup that caused him to become drowsy, and then she beat him up (Cofer 72). After he had recovered he came to town to marry María Sabida, thinking that then he would be able to kill her in her sleep. But she was wise and knew that he would be plotting. So, on their wedding night, she stuffed her clothes with honey and hid away. When the thief went to kill her

he was tricked again. He admired how cunning she was and promised that he would never try to hurt her again. And he didn't; he became an honest talented farmer and worked the land. "But, they say, María Sabida always slept with one eye open, and that is why she lived to be one hundred years old and wiser than any other woman on the Island of Puerto Rico" (Cofer 74). When the story was finished the children would go off and play leaving the women under the mango tree to talk about "serious things" (Cofer 74).

Throughout the telling of this *cuento* Ortiz Cofer interjects to tell the reader how she initially experienced it. She thought that Mamá was a brilliant storyteller; her words were captivating regardless of Ortiz Cofer's inability to understand exactly what lessons the stories were meant to teach her. She loved that Mamá could make her "forget the heat, the mosquitoes, [her] past in a foreign country, and even the threat of the first day of school looming just ahead" (Cofer 76). Here she intervenes again to explain that looking back, as an adult, she recognizes it was during these times under the mango tree she first began to feel and understand the power of words. Furthermore, from her grown-up perspective the story of María Sabida has new meaning. She is able to see that "María Sabida became the model Mamá used for the 'prevailing woman' – the woman who 'slept with one eye open' –whose wisdom was gleaned through the senses: from the natural world and from ordinary experiences. Her main virtue was that she was always alert and never a victim" (Cofer 76). Mamá was teaching her daughters and granddaughters to be strong prevailing women. No matter what life had in store for them, Mamá wanted to assure that they would never be victims. Ortiz Cofer's more mature understanding of this story gives her strength and encouragement. The mythical María Sabida becomes "her *comadre*, her alter-ego," and she becomes the prevailing woman (Cofer, "The Woman" 4). The past informs her present and future. Of María Sabida Ortiz Cofer writes, "My *comadre* taught me to defend my art, how to conquer the villain by my wits (Cofer, "The Woman" 4). Art and wit is precious to Cofer, as storytelling was to her grandmother; it is her strength. She claims "each line that [she] lays on the page points [her] toward [her] *comadre*, María Sabida, and takes her further away from falling into the role of *la sufrida*" (Cofer, "The Woman" 10). It is through writing that she engages the

past, attaches herself to it. “The present moment is enriched by the past, but the past is also enriched by the present” (Woolf, “Moments” 14). Ortiz Cofer illuminates this concept by giving separate voices to her past self, present self, and future self, and then entwining the various voices together.

Hans-Georg Gadamer, a philosopher who studied aesthetics joins this discussion about how people interact with the past from a slightly different angle. He argues, “There is a tension between acquired experience and the need to stabilize its lessons and the need to question and thereby destabilize the tried and the tested” (Davey). For Ortiz Cofer, and more poignantly for her mother, this means that new experiences in the United States resulted in tension, tension that replaced the comfort of understanding how life was lived on the Island. For example, buying groceries at the supermarket in New Jersey was a new and different experience for the both Ortiz Cofer and her mother. As a child Ortiz Cofer embraced this new experience while her mother would only shop at *La Bodega* because it was most like the markets she frequented on the Island. While this did not really make sense to Ortiz Cofer at the time, she later recalls, “We would linger at *La Bodega*, for it was there that mother breathed best, taking in the familiar aromas of the foods she knew from Mamá’s kitchen” (Cofer 91). Although buying groceries hardly seems consequential, it is one of the acquired experiences that make up who we understand ourselves to be.

“Those traditions, which are in constant debate over aim and direction often prove engaging and influential. […] It is the continuous debate and dialogue over practice that enables participants to move on, widen and transform acquired experience” (Davey). When we engage in discussions of our “acquired experiences”: religious beliefs, family traditions, spoken language, and even our trips to the grocery store, we have the opportunity to learn about the experiences of others, and thus enhance our understanding of the world.

This same type of process is the process of metamorphosis that Anzaldúa, Woolf, and Cofer seem to embrace. It is the constant deconstruction and reconstruction of acquired experiences that Gadamer insists enrich our understanding. By going to the new supermarket,

Ortiz Cofer was exposed to a different way of life. She now sees that the supermarket is bigger and provides variety; *La Bodega* is comfortable and familiar. She likes the supermarket, but still appreciates shopping at *La Bodega*; somehow both places are acceptable. Her experience of grocery shopping was expanded; it now encompasses more acceptable possibilities rather than deciding which experience is better.

Gadamer continues, "There is then "a tension within the aesthetic experience between what an artwork invokes of its subject-matter, and how what is invoked changes the character of that which invokes it" (Davey). As Ortiz Cofer is writing her remembrances of this experience, shopping with her mother, she is likely to alter the experience itself. As a child she did not personally experience racism at the supermarket, because she was not aware that it existed. However, much later, after her father told her stories of the difficulties he faced finding an apartment as a Puerto Rican man in New Jersey, she understands racism. It becomes part of her story. She then writes, "*La Bodega* […was] where your face did not turn a clerk to stone, where your money was as green as anyone else's" (Cofer 93). Even as she writes this she is again reflecting on what it means to her that her family was treated this way. It becomes part of her past and present identity, and yet she does not allow such experiences to negate positive experiences she had in New Jersey, like "how good it was to walk into the five-and-dime and sit at the counter drinking hot chocolate" or how "on Saturdays [her] whole family would walk downtown to shop at the big department stores on Broadway[; …] at some point [they] would go into Woolworths and sit at the soda fountain to eat" (Cofer 93). Ortiz Cofer understands all of these experiences to be part of her story, and the result is a polished and paradoxically structured memoir marked by a tone of comfort with contradictions and ambiguity. Through engaging this memoir readers learn to see themselves in a new way, and to consider how their own contradictory "moments of being" can shape their present identities.

"You do not lose yourself in the best stories – rather you find yourself" (Taylor 47). "We all have a common humanity" and can learn from *Silent Dancing* how to attach ourselves to our own pasts and live through from the start (Kevane and Herdia 118; Silent 13). Ortiz Cofer has

succeeded in this; she says “I don’t go around feeling like a stranger, I don’t see [my Puerto Rican heritage] as a burden as I did when I was a child because I don’t suffer from the same insecurities and identity problems” (Kevane and Herdia 122). Ortiz Cofer has written out her stories, to discover herself, and to reconstruct her identity as new experiences have called her to do so. By examining Ortiz Cofer’s memoir one can better understand how she constructs a meaningful identity through art and language; through intentionally engaging and structuring stories she throws off anxiety caused by dissonance and creates a space in which she can thrive amidst contradictions and ambiguity

Works Cited

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands – La Frontera : The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987. Print.

Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence; a Theory of Poetry.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1973. Print.

Cofer, Judith Ortiz. *Silent Dancing : A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood.* Houston, Tex.: Arte Público Press, 1990. Print.

Davey, Nicholas, “Gadamer’s Aesthetics.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* Ed. Edward N Zalta. Stanford University, 2008. Web.

Doyle, Jacqueline. "Thinking Back through Her Mothers: Judith Ortiz Cofer and Virginia Woolf." *Woolf Studies Annual.* 15 (2009): 91-111. Web.

Taylor, Daniel. “Tell Me a Story: The Life-Shaping Power of Our Stories”. New York: Bog Walk Press, 2001. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. “A Sketch of the Past.” *Virginia Woolf Reader: An Anthology of Her Best Short Stories, Essays, Fiction and Nonfiction.* United States of America: Harcourt Books Inc., 1984. 3–40. Print.

---. *Moments of Being.* United States of America: Harcourt Books Inc., 1985. Print.

Bibliography

Acosta-Belen, Edna. "Beyond Island Boundaries: Ethnicity, Gender, and Cultural Revitalization in Nuyorican Literature." *Callaloo* 15.4 (1992): 979-998. Web.

Algarin, Miguel. "Nuyorican Literature." *MELUS* 8.2 (1981): 89-92. Web.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands – La Frontera : The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987. Print.

Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence; a Theory of Poetry.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1973. Print.

Brown, Monica. *Neither here nor there : Nuyorican Literature, Home, and the "American" National Symbolic.* East Lansing, Mich.: Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, 1998. Web.

Christie, John S., and José B. Gonzalez. *Latino Boom : An Anthology of U.S. Latino Literature.* New York: Pearson/Longman, 2006. Print.

Cofer, Judith Ortiz. *Silent Dancing : A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood.* Houston, Tex.: Arte Público Press, 1990. Print.

---. "The Woman Who Slept with One Eye Open: Notes on Being a Writer." *Sleeping with One Eye Open: Women Writers and the Art of Survival.* Eds. Marilyn Kallet and Judith Ortiz Cofer. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1999. 3–12. Print.

Davey, Nicholas, "Gadamer's Aesthetics." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* Ed. Edward N Zalta. Stanford University, 2008. Web.

Douglas, Christopher. *A Genealogy of Literary Multiculturalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2009. Print.

Doyle, Jacqueline. "Thinking Back through Her Mothers: Judith Ortiz Cofer and Virginia Woolf." *Woolf Studies Annual.* 15 (2009): 91-111. Web.

Gac-Artigas, Priscilla. *Reflexiones : Ensayos Sobre Escritoras Hispanoamericanas Contemporáneas.* New Jersey: Ediciones Nuevo Espacio, 2002. Print.

Kallet, Marilyn, and Judith Ortiz Cofer . *Sleeping with One Eye Open : Women Writers and the Art of Survival*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999. Print.

Kevane, Bridget A., and Juanita Heredia . *Latina Self-Portraits : Interviews with Contemporary Women Writers.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000. Print.

Luis, William. "Dance between Two Cultures: Latino Caribbean Literature Written in the United States." Nashville, TN: Vanderbuilt University Press, 1997. Print.

Ocasio, Rafael, and Judith Ortiz Cofer. "Puerto Rican Literature in Georgia? An Interview with Judith Ortiz Cofer." *Kenyon Review*. 14.4 (1992): 43-50. Web.

Santiago, Roberto. *Boricuas : Influential Puerto Rican Writings--an Anthology*. New York: One World, 1995. Print.

Socolovsky, Maya. "Telling Stories of Transgression: Judith Ortiz Cofer's the Line of the Sun." *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.* 34.1 (2009): 95-116. Web.

Taylor, Daniel. “Tell Me a Story: The Life-Shaping Power of Our Stories”. New York: Bog Walk Press, 2001. Print.

Torres-Padilla, José L., and Carmen Haydée Rivera. *Writing Off the Hyphen : New Critical Perspectives on the Literature of the Puerto Rican Diaspora*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008. Print.

Vigil, A. "Boricua Literature: A Literary History of the Puerto Rican Diaspora by Lisa Sanchez Gonzalez." *American Literature.* 76.2 (2004): 407. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One’s Own.* New York: Harcourt Books Inc., 1989. Print.

---. “A Sketch of the Past.” *Virginia Woolf Reader: An Anthology of Her Best Short Stories, Essays, Fiction and Nonfiction.* United States of America: Harcourt Books Inc., 1984. 3–40. Print.

---. *Moments of Being.* United States of America: Harcourt Books Inc., 1985. Print.