

**Tribhuvan University**

**Crisis of Reconciliation Alvarez's *In the Time of Butterflies***

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**By**

**Tej Bahadur Gharti**

**Symbol No.: 02433**

**T.U. Regd. No.: 6-2-50-1863-2007**

**Central Department of English**

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Tej Bahadur Gharti has completed his thesis entitled "Crisis of Reconciliation Alvarez's *In the Time of Butterflies*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from May 2016 to February 2017. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voice.

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Keshab Sigdel

Supervisor

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Tribhuvan University**  
**Central Department of English**

**Letter of Approval**

The thesis entitled "Crisis of Reconciliation Alvarez's *In the Time of Butterflies*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Tej Bahadur Gharti has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

**Members of the Research Committee**

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\_\_\_\_\_

Internal Examiner

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

External Examiner

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Head

\_\_\_\_\_

Central Department of English

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Crisis of Reconciliation in Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies***

*This research examines Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* from the perspective of historico-cultural trauma theory of Dominic LaCapra and Jeffery Alexander. For decades, the Mirabal sisters suffer from totalitarian regime of Trujillo. Forces loyal to Trujillo run the sisters off the road and murder three of the Mirabal sisters, Minerva, Maria, and Patria. The reason for their killings was their opposition to the regime and inciting others to try to overthrow the brutal dictator. Dede, the fourth sister, remains alive to tell their story to the world. Once reluctant to get involved, and for years feeling guilty about her sister's deaths, Dede eventually understands that her life still has purpose. Dede cannot work normally through her life because she is not free from the echo of murder of her sisters and the dreadful effects of the war. Her effort to work through her trauma by telling the story remains perpetual so she cannot get rid of it throughout the novel.*

### **Key Terms:**

Trauma, Perpetual, Resistance, Transmitted, concentration, Working Through Trauma, acting Through Trauma, Brutalities, violence, Deception etc.

## Introduction

This research focuses on the issue of the psychological and emotional wound of the characters caused by war, violence and political instability in Julia Alvarez's novel *In the Time of the Butterflies*. This novel sketches the history of Caribbean nation Dominican Republic which is a history of violence, struggle and resistance. Rafael Trujillo enjoyed absolute power and his dictatorship resulted into genocide, massacre, and bloodshed. Alvarez's butterflies are the four Mirabal sisters: Minerva, Maria, Patria and Dede. Dede is the youngest of them. Butterflies are code names of Mirabal sisters in the revolutionary underground movement against Trujillo. In 1960, three of the sisters, members of the underground movement opposing the regime of the dictator Rafael Trujillo, were ambushed on a lonely mountain road and assassinated. Alvarez's postscript explains that her father was a member of the same resistance movement as the Mirabals and fled the Dominican Republic shortly before their deaths. Alvarez grew up hearing about the sisters. She is fictionalizing Dede, only living Mirabal as a narrator to reflect the past. By focusing on the psychological defense mechanisms exhibited by Dede, Alvarez is able to critique warfare and its effects on the human psyche.

Jeffery Alexander makes an extensive study of the pervasive effects of war trauma including historical trauma. Alexander analyzes the long-lasting effects of traumatic shock unleashed by war and its fatal effect in the integrity of culture. The effect of in human psyche is unimaginable and unthinkable. War trauma generates fatal and detrimental consequences. Both social memory and individual memory are dynamic processes of continuous change and development. A key feature of historical trauma theory is that the psychological and emotional consequences of the trauma experience are transported to subsequent generations through physiological,

environmental, and social pathways resulting in an intergenerational cycle of trauma response. What else, Alvarez describes human fear and anxiety through this text. She focuses on what makes it possible for man to inflict cruelty upon others. Alvarez uses the character of Dede and Mirabal to show that a man must dissociate from reality in order to carry out acts of violence without conscience. She is haunted by the images of her sisters. She cries, screams and sometimes hurls things around her as an effect of trauma. The dominant concern of the novel is to show how these psychological defenses negatively affect the characters' personal lives. By doing so, Alvarez is able to humanize the characters.

*In the Time of the Butterflies* deals with historico-cultural trauma caused by experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing. These experiences overwhelm people's ability to cope up with harmful situations. In the wake of such an experience, they are rendered powerless. The narrator actually memorizes the past in the act of the narrating her traumatic experiences. She experiences distressing events like war brutality, discrimination, bullying, domestic violence, long-term exposure to situations such as extreme poverty, and the death of loved one as well. Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* creates a multifaceted, simultaneous examination of man's capacity for violence and man's capacity for empathy.

The present study explores the effect of historical trauma on individuals and how the individuals respond to such situations. It also addresses the questions like: What are the consequences of Trujillo's domination of Mirabals? How do characters response to the domination? Does Dede become able to get rid of the memory of the past?

Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* has been interpreted and analyzed from

different perspectives. Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* dramatizes the breakdown of the psychological makeup of those who are directly affected by the warfare. Obi Maduakor considers the issue of moral outrage in the book. Commenting on the novel, he asserts:

Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* is an anachronistic book, both in its preoccupation with moral issues and the strong impact of its ritual undertone. The imagination that conceived it is nurtured by the same moral outrage that takes us through the early years of the four Mirabal sisters into adulthood, where they all became involved in politics. (85)

Maduakor's perspective gives a religious picture along with the moral values and norms in the post-independent Dominican Republic.

Aisha Karim is the leading critic of J. M. Alvarez. She is of the opinion that the mythological god of Dominican Republic is portrayed as the tormented deity in the novel, *In the Time of the Butterflies*. The torture and tormented plight of deity of Dominican Republic refers to the tormented plight of the native people of Dominican Republic. The following lines convey Karim's viewpoint on the core content of *In the Time of the Butterflies*:

Speaking of Alvarez' *In the Time of the Butterflies* deployment of premonition as a central trope in his work, the tormented figure of the god seems appropriate to the trouble-torn personality of the writer, and that it is also eminently opposite to a trouble-wracked. Whether the analogy between popular Dominican Republic deity and the writer works is viable or not, it is extremely suggestive for our reading of Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* the very novel that the mythographer singles out for harsh criticism. (11)



Karim in a way tries to symbolically represent the historical turmoil of the country through the imagery of the tormented god.

Another prominent critic of Alvarez, Jane Tammy, says that individual will is celebrated by the author as the agent of social transformation. Alvarez writes for the sake of affecting certain stroke of transformation in society. *In the Time of the Butterflies* aims at highlighting individual forces. Tammy writes:

Indeed, Alvarez's novel, tends toward questioning of this role of individual will as the agent of social transformation — a role that is generally affirmed in Alvarez's prolific dramatic output. In following the lives of a group of friends, their drunken bouts, their individual love affairs, and their idiosyncrasies, *In the Time of the Butterflies* launches a supremely witty critique of Latin American society, steered by corrupt, laughable, and self-hating elite. On one hand, the novel preempts any possibility of social transformation as coming from these elite. (27)

Tammy maintains that novel deliberately avoids the need to reflect on the problems of society. Alvarez is more interested in the probable methods of social transformation. Whatever methods she discusses are no longer efficacious and viable. Alvarez mistrusts collective activity because that cannot heal the trauma of the character. Moreover, she entices traumatized characters to remember that past to heal the traumatic experience. This novel works a case in point. As advised by the novelist, it is tough and challenging to reform society via philosophical model. No viable solution is propounded by the author.

The values propagated and embodied by the protagonist are worth considering. Dede's model of handling the fear generated by warfare and her vehement sense of

resistance are two facets of the same coin. Her unwavering trust in the power of unity is forced to disintegrate as her plan fails. The following lines clarify Nicholas Smithson's view:

An exploration of power in the wake of the psychic enervation of Dede is the foremost theme of the novel. It is about the power to rule that is fought for in war, or the power that is exerted in prejudice against a group of people who are considered less than human. It is about the power of the mind to conceptualize how to demean a nation of people; how to propagandize one's beliefs; or how to rationalize one's horrible and disgraceful actions. And it is about the power of survival. But power is not the only theme. (54)

Smithson's view that *In the Time of the Butterflies* is about not only the power of extensive military machines or the dominance exhibited by white supremacy or the exploitation of colonization is undoubtedly apt and appropriate. It is also about the sometimes deadly consequences of cultural clash, the disintegration of the human spirit, and the complete destruction of a way of life. Dede wants the rest of the world to partake of that mysterious substance. She has the vision of reforming society through pacifism. Most of the critics alluded to above pay their concern on history and past. However, this study studies the effects of such historical cruelties on individuals and the strategy they invent to cope with such situations.

This study mainly employs theoretical insights from trauma studies by Jeffery Alexander, Dominic LaCapra and Cathy Caruth. But it will also borrow ideas from other relevant critics and theorists to support the argument. Cathy Caruth views, "Trauma compels us to imagine that traumatic events do not simply occur in time.

Rather they fracture the very experience of time for the person to whom they happen.

(121)”. She defines trauma in the following way:

Trauma is generally understood as wound or external bodily injury in general. It is also defined as a "mental condition caused by severe shock, especially when the harmful effects last for a long time. In its later uses, particularly in the psychiatric literature, the term ‘trauma’ is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind (124).

Regarding the discursive nature of cultural trauma LaCapra postulates:

What constituted a usable past in one socio-cultural setting is often quite different from what is needed in another. Cultural trauma could be precisely a within-culture dialogue between groups of the same historical community bearing different symbolical meanings after a crucial historical event. The discourse of cultural trauma in its essence is always multi-vocal and polyphonic. (47)

The traumatic discourse opens whenever some groups are interested in continuing the re-dramatization of some negatively valued past events. But the others do all they can to disremember the past as quickly as possible. In other words, for the traumatic discourse to be revealed, the cultural space itself must be divided between the supporters of the golden pre-traumatic past and the bright post-traumatic future.

Several elements of historical and cultural trauma exist at the heart of Alvarez’s novel, *In the Time of the Butterflies*. The lingering influences of Civil War of Dominican Republic inflicts traumatic onslaught on the lives of many people. In this context, the analysis of Alvarez’s *In the Time of the Butterflies* yields plenty of textual evidences to bolster the fact that cultural trauma lies at the heart of the novel.

This novel *In the Time of the Butterflies* engages with temporal-spatial moments in the Civil War of Dominican Republic.

Dede is a complicated character in terms of her living. The second youngest, she is the most domestic and the most opposed to resistance activities. Her loyalty to her sisters never wavers, though, and her silence about what she knows of their involvement in the underground makes her somewhat complicit in their work. She blames her reluctance to join the resistance on her husband, who orders her to have nothing to do with the movement and refuses to let Patria bury boxes of weapons on his property. Gradually, though, she comes to realize that she has used her husband's authority as a way to hide her own lack of courage. Toward the end of the story, Dede begins to consider joining her sisters in their cause, but she does not find the courage before they are killed. After the deaths of Minerava, Maria, and Patria, Dede becomes identified to both herself and to Dominicans as the surviving sister. In this role she lives out the rest of her life, telling and retelling the story of her sisters, keeping the memory of their courageous example alive. She gradually sinks into the maelstrom of disordered psychic condition. Her miserable psychic condition appears to be initiated by the aggressive forces that have invaded the indigenous culture to which she belongs. The following lines describe how Dede's plight corresponds to the burgeoning problems in the culture to which she belongs:

And that's how I got free. I don't mean just going to sleep away school on a train with a trunkful of new things. I mean in my head after I got to Inmaculada and met Sinita and saw what happened to Lina and realized that I'd just left a small cage to go into a bigger one, the size of our whole country. (13)

All the roles she plays situate her in a broad social setting and her moral fall is staged

against the background of many sites. Her failure in all environments, paradoxically, does not complicate her character but exposes his corruption in which there is no metaphysical depth. Dede's actions are made nothing more than the victim of the political system. The unfolding tale of her degeneration and degradation does not leave any doubt about her pathology.

It is universally true that horrific experience are so deeply disturbing, so overwhelming, those victims of trauma will try to surprise bad memories rather than confront them. However, many trauma researchers believe that it is the repression of memories and feelings that is the heart of trauma suffering in both the short and long term. Time does not heal trauma. According to LaCapra, "A victim of war trauma must be helped to express suffering and to confront bad memories, with the support and guidance of an empathic and informed adult (67)". The very act of talking or writing about or even acting out, traumatic events is a way for trauma-victims to being healing and start on the road to recovery. Every culture has its own way of dealing with traumatic experience.

Based on historico-cultural trauma theory, this study analyzes Dede's inner struggle and survival dilemma in Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* from three aspects: witness to violence, castration anxiety and displacement of identity, enriching the cultural and ethical implications of trauma in the interpretation of this novel. It concludes that the Dede is unable to extricate herself entirely from the ideological control of Trujillo's domination. For this reason, she fails to reconstruct a clear identity and work through her trauma. Moreover, this novel metaphorically suggests that the Dede's experience is not merely her individual trauma but also the collective trauma created by the Dominican Civil War.

The setting of the novel is Dominican Republic where the readers are told the

story from the voice of Dede who serves as a spoke person of the novelist. The title of the novel creates the sense of disturbance and pain because it indicates to Mirabal sisters killed by Trujillo. Dede is still trying to manage her personal grief over the loss of her sisters. She plays back memories of their lives together. These memories honor Patria, Minerva, and Maria Teresa not only as patriots and martyrs but also as sisters, daughters, wives, and mothers.

When cultural trauma leads to post traumatic stress disorder, damage may involve physical changes inside the brain and to brain chemistry. It changes the person's response to future stress. The sense of being overwhelmed can be delayed by weeks, years or even decades. "War trauma can lead to serious long-term negative consequences that are often overlooked even by mental health professionals" (Lacabra 76). Trauma can be caused by a wide variety of events, but there are a few common aspects. Trauma may accompany physical trauma or exist independently of it.

Exposure to the horror and brutalities contaminate the souls of those who survived it. In *In the Time of the Butterflies*, the narrator is heavily exposed to the countless numbers of brutalities. All the forthcoming years of the survivors would be full of unexpected shock, tremors and sudden disorders. The inability of the narrator to return to the normal world is embedded in the consciousness of those who survived the genocidal massacre in concentration camp. The fate of the narrator stands as the sufferings of those who were forcibly confined in the camp. Insecurities and prolonged mourning are the daily routines of those children who are affected by the indirect realization of Civil war horror. Civil War and genocide damaged family, disintegrated and shattered the root of family. The survivors of Civil War had to endure the lingering effects of trauma.

Much of the action of *In the Time of the Butterflies* occurs during Rafael

Trujillo's dictatorship in the Dominican Republic. The novel portrays many instances of how the authoritarian state permeates life for the Mirabel sisters and the other characters. For instance, they must watch what they say since there are spies hiding outside their house. Even those citizens who are not suspected rebels are afraid to speak openly, since they cannot trust their own neighbors. In the first chapter, before the Mirabel family comes under any suspicion, their relaxing evening outdoors is ruined when Papa accidentally says Trujillo's name in a less than flattering way. All of a sudden, "the dark fills with spies who are paid to hear things and report them down at Security (67)". The authoritarian regime of Trujillo, "It looked like the newsreels of Hitler and the Italian one with the name that sounds like fettuccine," namely, Mussolini (78). Minerva and Dede are brought into the police station in Monte Cristi. Minerva mentions that Captain Pena has given them permission to travel there, but a veiled threat is perceived in the officer who is questioning them: "The paroxysm of blinking made me pity the poor man. His own terror was a window that opened onto the rotten weakness at the heart of Trujillo's system" (98).

To quote LaCapra again, those who are aware of the fatal effects of war trauma "show that each has very different concepts of psychological distress. And much also depends on the family circumstances of the victims of war trauma, as well as their age and the nature of their exposure to traumatic events (105)". In all cultures one of the most important factors is the cohesion of the family and community, and the degree of nature and support that children receive. Indeed, out of the most significant from parents-often more distressing than the war activities themselves.

The high ranking Trujillo Joll arrives one day, determined to gather information regarding the local band of Barbarians who have reportedly taken to raiding nearby frontier outposts. The Barbarians represent a kind of omnipresent

outside threat which seeks to trample on the security and safety of the people of the Empire. Though the Dede has seen no evidence of a gathering Barbarian menace, and though he knows they have no clear designs to engage in a battle against the frontier fortress' of the Empire, he resigns to the fact that soon the Trujillo will be done with his work and will return to the Capital and the quiet life of their isolated settlement will return to its peaceful normalcy. It proves that to erase the existence of the other in the history of totalitarian powers is impossible and this is the result of nameless fear that threatens. In the first part of the novel, torture is discussed but not described explicitly. In the first and the later parts of the novel, Trujillo, who is described as ruthless and merciless, interrogates the people in to country, and labels them as barbarians and he thinks that they are a great threat to the town and the existence of his rule:

Torture means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted by or at the instigation of a public official on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or confession, punishing him for an act he has committed, or intimidating him or other persons. (Alvarez 45)

As the Dede struggles with the rationale of the visiting Trujillo, her suffering from totalitarian government becomes clear. She fills her days with unauthorized archeological expeditions in the desert, garbled self-reflections of her benign oversight of the outpost. In this respect, victims that are exposed to torture and suppression will have to confess to anything when pain becomes beyond endurance.

The effects of trauma diffuse from “one generation to another. One example of the transmission of trauma is the cultural trauma” (Caruth 45). Several years after the camp inmates got freedom following the fall of Civil War, the survivors of Civil War



trauma remained tormented. Even their progenies are affected to some extent as their parent narrated stories about their difficulties and sufferings in the concentration camp. Oral narration, written discourse and search for relief via confessing about the sufferings and trauma are the usually practiced means whereby trauma is supposed to get transmitted. The effects of War trauma are invincible.

Torture has also the ability to limit or stop the voice of the victims who are not able to speak of the self anymore. Since tortured people become passive and inactive, they lack the ability to defend or talk about their identities and their rights. When Trujillo prepares to interrogate a father and husband of Dede, accused of supporting the attacks of barbarians, the Dede asks him “How do you ever know when a man has told you the truth? (5)”. Behaving as a God-like being, Trujillo has an ability to get the truth from the tone in the voice of the victims and he explains the way of his interrogation as: “First I get lies, you see- this is what happens- first lies, then pressure, then more lies, then more pressure, then the break, then more pressure, then the truth. Pain is truth (5)”. In the course of defending Trujillo she undergoes a deep crisis, loses grip on reality and recedes into insanity. Alvarez’s use of Dede as a “puppet on the hand of Dictator (87).” Dede’s identification with the state is full of banality of evil. The following lines make a dramatic exemplification of the case in point:

What did I want? I didn't know anymore. Three years stuck in Ojo de Agua, and I was like that princess put to sleep in the fairy tale. I read and complained and argued with Dede, but all that time I was snoring away. When I met Lio, it was as if I woke up. The givens, all I'd been taught, fell away like so many covers when you sit up in bed. (54)

Dede feels trapped inside her own country. She sees her situation mirrored in that of

the rabbits in their pens, but she realizes that she is not independent.

In the novel, Dede expresses Trujillo as: “giddy and chimps” (2). Her fear towards Trujillo is clearly manifested in the following lines:

I observed that once in every generation, without fail, there is an episode of hysteria about the barbarians. There is no woman living along the frontier who has not dreamed of a dark barbarian hand coming from under the bed to grip her ankle, no man has not frightened himself with visions of the barbarians carousing in his home, breaking the plates, setting fire to the curtains, raping his daughters. These dreams are the consequence of too much ease. Show me a barbarian army and I will believe. (9)

In the novel, Dede is modeled on the more mature image of the author herself. Dede is depicted as a great victim of Trujillo’s rule. Along with her all other characters are represented as the victims of historical cruelties. Each characters struggles to survive the atrocity of the history and each of them seeks a new life beyond the fiction that imprisons them. The protagonists are under the threat of dictatorship and the nastiest acts of violence occur in the sanctity of their family and home. Accordingly, individuals emerge as victims of those who wield power over them. For Dede in 1994, this is the moment she has fixed in her memory as zero when the events that led to the deaths of her sisters began. Already there are spies who can report the family to security for her father's negative comment. This quotation also foreshadows the known outcome of the family' history: earlier, it has been established that Dede is, in fact, the only one left to tell their story.

And that's how I got free. I don't mean just going to sleep away school on a train with a trunkful of new things. I mean in my head after I got to

Inmanculada and met Sinita and saw what happened to Lina and realized that I'd just left a small cage to go into a bigger one, the size of our whole country (13).

Minerva uses "free" to mean enlightened; at Inmaculada Concepcion, she realizes that Trujilo she has believed in does not exist, and the seeds of a revolutionary are sown within her. This use of "free" fits with the idea of a liberating "liberal" education. The cage metaphor recalls the theme of entrapment: because of the dictatorship in the Dominican Republic, none of its citizens is truly free except in the way Minerva describes here. Thoughts, at least, are free. Also, her home had been a cage of rules, while the country is a cage of violence and authoritarian rule: "We have traveled almost the full length of the island and can report that every corner of it is wet, every river overflows its banks, every rain barrel is filled to the brim, and every wall washed clean of writing no one knows how to read anyway" (117).

Trauma has these features: revolution, racial riots; forced migration or deportation, ethnic cleansing; genocide, extermination, mass murder; acts of terrorism or violence; assassination of the political leader, resignation of a high-ranking official; opening secret archives and revealing the truth about the past; revisionist interpretation of national heroic tradition; collapse of an empire, lost war (Caruth 452). Cultural understanding of trauma is in no way undermined by the fact that trauma has an affective dimension.

Minarva is driving back from the capital with her parent after Enrique Mirabal, now insane, is released from prison. The rainy weather is the physical incarnation of the metaphorical storm that began for the Mirabal family when Minerva slapped Trujillo at the Discovery Day dance: "And the rain comes down hard, slapping sheets of it"(39). It also represents Trujilo's power: the island is

saturated in wetness as well as in the influence of the dictatorship. This quotation thus demonstrates the authoritarian theme that permeates the novel.

It was under the Trujillo regime that the self-deluding mindset of dissociating oneself from the facts and lessons of the past was most firmly rooted. The dictator mandates, for example, that his portrait be placed in every home alongside religious icons, gradually drawing within the victim's minds a subconscious parallel between himself and divinity, an illusion that stunts the beholders' analytical faculties to fully identify with or direct their attention toward Trujillo's atrocities. Patria discusses her own susceptibility to such a deception. "I had heard, but I had not believed. Snug in my heart, fondling my pearl, I had ingored their crisis of desolation. How could our loving, all powerful father allow us to suffer so? I looked up challenging him. And two faces had merged." (53)

Trauma, after all, is an incomprehensible event, and defies all categorization and representation. If there must be any kind of representation, Caruth calls for modes that are as unsettling as the event itself (qtd. in Leys 269). Similarly, Walter Benn Michaels postulates that the horrors of trauma can only be expressed if language does "not [transmit] the normalizing knowledge of horror but horror itself" (268). Since trauma is defined as a radical break with previous references of which the symptoms make themselves known belatedly, LaCapra counts "writing trauma" as one of those potentially recurring symptoms. Gradually, writing trauma allows a victim to come to terms with the traumatic past and thus forms an elementary component of the healing process. In literary terms, writing trauma can "achieve articulation in different combinations and hybridized forms" (LaCapra 186). But the actual representation of trauma is impossible as it has multiple manifestations in the same situation.

Hence, the psychological impact of the Trujillo is overbearing on Patria and

causes her to lapse in a deceptively blissful and willful ignorance of the past as irrelevant to the deeds of a man whom it is difficult to imagine as anything but a magnanimous and potent guardian of his people. With the evils swiftly forgotten and unopposed, their exits absolutely no barrier to their perpetuation. And what progress can emerge from a bloodbath of censorship and submission? Patria herself is permanently hindered by this psychological block when, even following her affiliation with the fourteenth of July moment, she plays to a portrait of Trujillo for her son Nelson's release from imprisonment, acknowledging her importance before him through her pleas. She grovels before evil in hopes that evil will accede to her desire on its own accord, which treatment will never occur in regard to one still a number of the good. Only through transformation into evils lackey can favors be coaxed out of dictatorship. But Patria does not in this situation extract lessons from the Fourteenth of July and previous acts of carnage ordered by Trujillo. She does not take cognizance of Trujillo's repeatedly manifested evil and still considers a comprise, or a life in perpetual slavery and terror, to be desirable. She confirms to the status quo instead of seeking to amend it. A brighter future is inaccessible to her whenever she does not properly deliberate over the past.

Trauma seeks the disintegration of family relationships, culture and even civilization due to various reasons. It finds out the reasons and possible consequences of clash among family members when there is misunderstanding among family members mainly old and young generation:

Traumatizing events or situations may produce dislocations in the routine, accustomed ways of acting or thinking, change the life-world of the people in often dramatic ways, and reshape their patterns of acting and thinking . . . potentially traumatizing events or situations:

unemployment, inflation, lowering of living standards and degradation of prestige, poverty, rising crime, a flow of immigrants, and corruption among the political elite. (Sztompka 456)

Due to traumatizing events, the daily routine of the people is also changed. People lose their track of life and are compelled to do as per the demand of the time. The meaning of 'trauma' has become broader – once referring to the psychological experiences of individuals, this term was extended to the collective experience of traumatized communities or – as in the concept of trauma – beyond the borders of directly affected participants (315). Once trauma was confined within only psychology, but with the development of different theories and trends, it has got entry into cultural and historical aspects.

The men left behind in the Dominican Republic are not so lucky. The death of those three Mirabal sisters who never entirely manage to extinguish the tendency of mental blocking within them serve as testimony to this fact. Minerva receives a note of caution from the attendant Jorge Almonte warning her to "avoid the past". Minerva recounts what she would undertake in response. "My hand shook. I would not tell the others. It could only make things worse, and Mate's asthma had just begun to calm down" (33). Minerva neglects to heed a warning from her past. It is unknown whether Almonte is aware of the particular plot against the Mirabal sisters or whether he merely judges the past to be a fitting place for an ambush from similar past experience.

Dede says it to Minerva as he tried to convince her that the rumors that Trujillo wants her dead are not silly. She talks it to mean that popular opinion is always right, and in this case, it is Minerva who refuses to listen to her sister, calling the talk 'Silly Rumors', but this is a mistake and she is killed. Mama also uses this proverb to warn

Menerva about travelling to visit Puerto Plata. This phrase also is the title of the last section of the fast chapter of the novel, told from Minerva's point of view. It is as if this section serves as proof that rumors are usually true, that the people have a certain wisdom, and that one should take warnings seriously.

She took bath my hands in hers as if we were getting ready to jump together into a deep spot in the lagoon of Ojo de Agua, 'Breathe slowly and deeply; she intoned , 'slowly and deeply. I pictured myself on a hot day falling, slowly and deeply, into those cold layers of water. I held on tight to my sister's hands, no longer afraid of anything but that she might let go. (39)

After Minerva tells Maria Teresa about the secret meetings she has been attending at Don Horacio's house, they have this experience together. It is the moment that Maria Teresa becomes part of the revolutionary moment, if only symbolically. By lying for her sister about their ill Ton Mon, she demonstrated her loyalty, but now she understands what she lying about, and she is demonstrating her allegiance: "When I met Lio, it was as if I woke up. The givens all I'd been taught fell away like so many covers when you sit up in bed" (86).

It is interesting here that Alvarez has Minerva "use the metaphor of a princess in a fairly tale, since Minerva, of all the sisters, represents a reversal in the traditional role of women" (Karim 56). Lio, the revolutionary, inspires her and changes the course of her life. Walking up is representative of realizing how she can become involved in the revolution ad bring about change in her own life, by having something to dedicate herself to instead of "snoring away", as well as representing how she can bring about change for the Dominican Republic.

It is a reference to "Jesus' rising from the dead on Easter, and it reflects the

struggle Patria has felt throughout the novel to reconcile her heavenly self with her responsibilities on earth” (Mirian 67). She draws a connection herself and Jesus; she is going through her own trials, waiting for her son, Nelson, to be released from prison. The theme of Trujillo trucking on “Jesus' reputation is interlaced with her own connection to Jesus, for she prays to Trujillo every time she passes his portrait, she prays to him, "Take me instead, I'll be your sacrificial lamb” (75).

This researcher emphasizes its transfer of meaning from physical to the psychical. A psychical trauma is something that enters the psyche that is so overwhelming. It cannot be assimilated by usual mental processes. The other aspect is emotional trauma is not confined to the single shock that comes with an assault. The form of trauma that this researcher addresses is emotional injury, sometimes sudden and unexpected, sometimes taking place during a prolonged time. During the course of their narratives, Dede time and again remembers her relationship with her father. The following lines cast doubt on the so-called pioneering spirit of the then culture from where both Dede and her father:

Both Dede and her father are good. Dede sets down body language, dreams, and myth. In their respective roles as freedom fighters, Dede explores the psychological interior of the Dominica rendered in their mythology, and she journeys into the physical interior of it. As explorers, both are driven to know the unknown, and then to encompass the unknown both mentally and physically (69).

By centering father, Dede upstages the value of native culture, familial ties and spiritual unity which occurs time and again in her mind.

Dede is the contemporary intellectual enmeshed in the doom-laden projects of latter-day of Civil War of Dominica. She takes upon herself in the role of the “missing



God”, exalting in her strength and solipsistic power. But Dede physically and psychologically disintegrates with the loss of the father and sisters. Each is a metonymy of her era and country. She typifies the physical dominance and religious arrogance of the Trujillo rule. Dede typifies the rhetorical dominance and psychic disturbance of contemporary society.

Causes of trauma are repeated sense of alienation, fear of being dissolved in the mass, lack of adaptation to the new environment and strong patriarchal bias against women. Traumatic experiences often involve a threat to life or safety. It’s not the objective facts that determine whether an event is traumatic. Not all potentially traumatic events lead to lasting emotional and psychological damage. Some people rebound quickly from even the most tragic and shocking experiences. Others are devastated by experiences that, on the surface, appear to be less upsetting. A number of risk factors make people susceptible to emotional and psychological trauma. People are more likely to be traumatized by a stressful experience. They’re already under a heavy stress load or have recently suffered a series of losses. People are also more likely to be traumatized by a new situation if they’ve been traumatized before – especially if the earlier trauma occurred in childhood.

Dede has become solitary and feels that her husband has become a "bossy, old-fashioned macho" who doesn't notice her unhappiness” (89). Her sisters come to ask her to join their revolutionary cell, and Dede silently decides to leave her husband. She is about to ask the priest for advice, but when she realizes that Padre de Jesus is "one of them, “she becomes afraid he will convince her to join the revolution, so she flees” (87). Her husband has left her with his sons, but the priest convinces them to reconcile and take a vacation together. She could not be united with her husband. Dede decided to help her people that can be regarded as a protest against the rule. In her every

attempt, she is tortured, by the ruler. Dede tells her suffering to the novelist as:

I take her face between my hands and stare into the dead centers of her eyes, from which twin reflections of me stare solemnly back. ‘And this?’ I say, touching the worm-like sear in the corner."That is nothing. That is where the iron touched me. It made a little burn. It is not sore.” She pushes my hands away. “What do you feel towards the men who did this?” She lies thinking a long time. Then she says, “I am tired of talking” (40-41).

During her stay at the prison house, there is a ritual of washing the disfigured feet of the barbarian girl that repeatedly occurs in the novel. When she is confronted by the body of the tortured girl, symbolically, he desires to purify herself and to clear away the feeling of guilt and dirtiness that the barbarian girl has been exposed to.

Dede’s desperate need to re-establish her identity takes her on a psychic journey in which the explorer of unknown lands becomes an explorer of his own unexamined interiority. The journey begins with a hallucination of her deceased mother reading about her death and evolves into an apocalyptic revelation confirming his existence and beliefs. In his first vision, a sun-dazzled stone desert speaks to him telling him that behind every exterior there lays a “black interior quite, quite strange to the world” (77). Yet when any interior is penetrated, the interior transforms itself into exterior, so that there is no certainty that interiors exist.

In another vision, she is presented metaphorically that she is an environment of space and solitude pervaded by sun. Her senses, all but sight - are in a vacuum. These sentences “I became a spherical eye moving through the wilderness and ingesting it...I am all that I see, such loneliness! What is there that not me?” (79) are illustrative of the case in point. The solitary mastering soul maintains its interior in a depth of

darkness unknown to the others. When its interior is revealed to light, it can no longer exist in solitary darkness. Brought up from the depths, it is exposed to a brilliance of light that is blinding, and then, to all that the light illumines.

Dede remembers her sisters' youth, when they were growing up under the Trujillo regime and the way that the authoritarian government slowly chipped away at their freedom. Things really come to a head when Minerva, her younger sister, refuses to sleep with the president and he takes revenge by throwing their father in jail. After many years working in the underground resistance, Dede's three sisters are ambushed and murdered on a mountain road after visiting two of their husbands in jail. It is Trujillo's final revenge against the girls. Dedé and her husband collect the bodies and bring them home. Dedé recognizes that her martyrdom is to live without her sisters. She suffers throughout her life from this traumatic incident. Unlike those of her sisters, Dede's chapters are narrated in third person. However, Alvarez uses the technique of rhetorical questions to imply that the reader is, at times, inside Dede's head, with access to what she is thinking or wondering. For instance, when Dede questions why the woman is coming to interview her in March, not in November like most interviewers.

As Dede describes her sister for the interviewer, she feels as if she is pinning them down "with a handful of adjectives". She spouting out the usual descriptions that must be used to talk about them in biographies and articles, removed from who they really were. But during her interview with the woman, she can be transported back to the time when they were alive, remembering them as actual people rather than just as myths. That is also what Alvarez does with *In the Time of the Butterflies*, making the sisters into developed characters rather than just heroes.

A thorough analysis and interpretation of *In The Time of Butterflies* probes into

how the present novel dramatizes traumatic life of people caused due to various reasons mainly the sense of cultural loss, war, genocide and massacres. However their trauma remains perpetual despite their several efforts to get rid from it. The novel interweaves the different traumatic stories of four Mirable sisters. The traumatic situation of the novel is supported by the ubiquitous reign of darkness, forsaken sites, and the scenes of the cemetery and so on. The core finding of this research is that the impact of war, cultural chaos and totalitarianism lingering vestiges not only block the progress of an individual but also the progressive forces of society. Consequences of trauma are far-reaching. The traumatic fallout of historical regression seems to be transmitted from one generation to another and from one culture to another. The traumatic experiences faced by the inmates of concentration camp of Trujillo have to be studied and examined in broader light. Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* projects profound insight into the far-reaching traumatic experiences which the survivors of warfare and colonial aggression faced.

In *In the Time of the Butterflies*, the protagonist attempts to escape from the prison of her mind. However, intimate memories and dark secrets rise up at will to paralyze their psyches. This sort of circumstances brings her to the historical door Trujillo's regime. Severing one's roots is shown to be nigh impossible because the past is etched onto the psyche. Alvarez captures the anxieties and timelessness of the human condition. She dramatizes the notion of performativity as an intrinsic component of identity. Under the white minority apartheid government, rigid censorship attempted to curb the potential power of artistic creativity. Dominican Republican writers from both sides of the racial divide were affected by this persecution. State censors were well aware that writers could incite violence, mobilize the masses, and spawn rebellion. The direct impact of these events can be seen in the

cultural integrity and historical continuity.

Brutality, dehumanization, beatings of inmates on slightest provocation, suffocating surrounding, random shooting and cremation of living bodies of natives of Dominican Republic are some of the heart-rending events which the main narrator of this novel narrates. Lack of minimum provision and requirement, deteriorating dignity and self-esteem and degrading health are some of the disastrous events that crippled the psyche and spirit of captives of the camp. In addition, constant threat of execution and impending doom had had impact on the psyche of sufferers of the camp.

It is the way of using thought as the means to achieve inner integrity in the face of threat and execution from the external world. The narrator Dede herself used this method. She involves in various abnormal behaviors like screaming, harming herself and throwing hear by objects. She tells the story of her past in order to heal the traumatic effect but she is not able to recover herself from the historical dread of the Trujillo regime.

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