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### **The Mirabal Voices of Polyphonic Discourse:**

#### ***In the Time of the Butterflies***

The Mirabal sisters were Dominican women caught up in politics and history. Their bravery and courage to challenge injustice cost them their lives. Julia Alvarez documents their journey. In her postscript, she questions their determination asking, “What gave them that special courage?” (Alvarez, 323). Through her rendition of the story, she presents “not the Mirabal sisters of fact or even the Mirabal sisters of legend” (324). Alvarez never knew the family, so she claims to create the characters in her imagination. She uses her best estimation of the Mirabal family spirit. In the story, *In The Time Of The Butterflies* (1994) three women Minerva, Patria, and Maria Teresa Mirabal are given voices by Alvarez to tell their story. They joined a revolution called the 14<sup>th</sup> Movement and were eventually murdered because the group challenged the rule of Dominican patriarchy. The oddity surrounding the events lay in the fact that the girls were not subversive in any sense of the word. This essay will explore how the novel *In the Time Of the Butterflies* corresponds with the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin’s theories of the novel. The characteristics of polyphonic discourse in Alvarez’s text contain voices that speak back to and

engage in dialogue with El Jefe and his regime. I also argue that Alvarez used postmodern hagiography to study the motives of the Mirabal sisters. Critic Trenton Hickman agrees to state how Alvarez used this theory in writing the tale with an honorific treatment of the heroine subjects (Hickman, 99). Because the Alvarez family migrated from the Dominican Republic in 1960 due to her father's involvement in an underground movement, Alvarez knew the legend of *Las Mariposas* (the Butterflies). Discovering a fourth sister Dede, was alive in the Dominican Republic, Julia Alvarez interviewed her. The story grew from the experience.

Alvarez used a strategy to depict the sisters in a compelling way giving insight to their different personalities. When writing *In the Time of the Butterflies*, Alvarez resists a monolithic category strategy. A singular narrative voice would not provide the individualized view of each character. Alvarez's strategy to differentiate each sister's personality is revealed as each narrates their own chapters. The literary technique stream of consciousness could have been used because Alvarez wanted the story to look inside the character's mind. She wanted the audience to not only witness their thought process but to understand their motivations. Therefore, Alvarez made use of this technique extending the one narrative voice into several individualized expressions. This conclusively provides the audience with a personalized outlook from each of *Las Mariposas*. Alvarez's desire to have the audience hear the voices of the Mirabal sisters was clever. Withdrawing the idea of a single narrator, Alvarez instead individualized their honorific status by introducing each character as a chronicler. This provides the audience with a distinct view of each sister's personality and her independent inclination for joining the 14<sup>th</sup> Movement. Akin to the stream of consciousness literary device, Alvarez's choice to distinguish the voices of each sister turns to the theory of polyphonic discourse.

### The Polyphonic Novel

The strategies of the polyphonic novel succeed in regulating multiple voices. The word polyphonic is a musical term. It refers to the simultaneous lines of independent melody making a whole. In a novel, polyphony is a metaphorical adopting voice (qtd. in Williams, 1). This argument uses the polyphonic variety of voice to mean a complex interweaving of melodies. The Mirabal sister's voices are audible through Alvarez's novel as she plays each sister's identity between and within individual chapters. The intimate articulation of the mythical lives of the Mirabal sisters are separately expressed and according to Bakhtin their words are "defined as a diversity of social speech types and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized" (Bakhtin, 262). The method of dialogism Alvarez used displays the change in tone and character. It also explores the difference in each sister's goal and resolves. Minerva has a strong determined personality. She always strives for independence with self-determination to succeed. When the girl's parents agree to let them go away to school, autonomy is exactly what Minerva achieved. Minerva proclaimed her liberty stating,

"And that's how I got free. I don't mean just going to sleepaway school on a train with a trunkful of new things. I mean in my head after I go 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" (Alvarez, 13)

Minerva felt there was more to life than being a wife and mother. She was determined to experience the fullness of freedom that self-determination provides. Her freedom opened her eyes to the injustices thrust upon women and marginalized people. Maria Teresa, younger sister of Minerva but just as determined was given voice through an epistolary form of communication. Her diaries

convey her thoughts. She too wanted success and a fulfilled life. Maria Teresa, also called Mate, experiences the most character development in the story. Because Mate receives a diary from Minerva on her communion day, the reader has access to her personal thoughts. Through Mate's intimate writing the audience witnesses her continuous development. From childhood to when she becomes a revolutionary, a wife, and a mother Mate's polyphonic tone changes and matures. She gains confidence but Mate remains a humble soul throughout the entire novel. Alvarez denotes the differences between Minerva and Mate showing one's strength and determination to gain freedom while the other coexists with internal confidence. A successful and talented writer, Mate documents in her daily journal about winning awards in school. She mentions how she purposefully allows others to access the delight of winning too. She states,

“I've won the writing prize twice, and I would have this week, too, but I decided to leave some i's undotted. It doesn't help with the other girls if you are best all the time.” (Alvarez, 32)

Her gentleness is displayed here, but as the novel continues Mate turns intellectually independent. The injustice she witnesses from the Trujillo regime begins to buttress her determination to join the 14<sup>th</sup> Movement. The two sister's personalities begin to fuse as Alvarez places each with variegated points of view and voice. Once Mate is arrested, she decides to no longer follow along innocently ignorant of dangerous matters. Mate starts to problematize Minerva's revolutionary idealism. The ordeal of prison cements the dilemma they are in and Mate gains voice and belief in her identity. For example, when Minerva chides the prisoners about morale and how they are being treated demanding they go on a hunger strike to protest. Mate speaks up and says to Minerva, “We're already half-starved, what more do you want?” (Alvarez, 236)

This is an indication that Mate's identity is coming to prominence. Minerva was surprised at Mate's rebellion and relinquished her position. She told Mate to do what she thought was right. Minerva's voice remains a constant stronghold for *Las Mariposas* in and out of jail. The dialogism that each of the Mirabal sisters plays in the discourse explores the meaning of polyphonic discourse and the strength of multiple voices. The quality of insistence toward the same idea each sister put forth but with distinctiveness is observed in the dialogue. The relationship of the Mirabal sisters evolves as the situations associated with the movement complicate their existence. The positive connotations of dialogism are reinforced by the acknowledgment of each sister joining the movement in their own time and their own way. This allows each sister recognition in a voice as an independent and unquestionably authoritative person.

The way the sisters expressed their social speech exemplifies their diversity in language. How each personalized their political view and information to persuade each other and sometimes themselves is a direct result of polyphonic discourse. Attending school opened their eyes to a world view. There they experienced firsthand the outrageous behavior of Trujillo. They were eyewitnesses to the atrocities of the Trujillo dictatorship. In time they gained agency and with confidence the girls began speaking back to and engaging with Trujillo and his regime. Minerva was the first to commit to the 14<sup>th</sup> Movement and resist the Trujillo government. Eventually Patria and Maria Teresa joined also. Each of the Mirabal girls represents distinct views about how to symbolize their various adaptations of the struggle. Most importantly the Bakhtin theories enact the central themes in Alvarez's book. The major focus of the Mirabal sisters was to work against a calculating negative force of government: The Trujillo Regime. Polyphonic discourse allows each character in the novel her own space to present her comprehensive opinion and exclaim

notions of individual defiance. The sister's rebuff of government practices was done with the integrity they had learned from the inner workings of the Mirabal family.

In the interview with Dede Mirabal, Alvarez picked up on this facet of moral character within the family. Dede's attitude and statements connote positive and virtuous attributes that Alvarez notices. Dede's truthfulness and her conduct exhibit a sincere heartfelt depiction of her emotions. When she talks to Alvarez about the story of her sister's tragedy, Alvarez witnesses her pathos as she answers the question of why she survived. Dede simply sighs and says, "There were many happy years. I remember those. I try anyhow. I tell myself, Dede, concentrate on the positive!. . . in your memory it is such and such a day, I start over, playing the happy moment in my head" (Alvarez, 7). This sentiment is indicative of the element of candidness necessary in the writing of a novel. Bakhtin describes how honesty undergirds the structuring dichotomy of poetic and novelistic style. Bakhtin praises novelistic prose because it is honest: because it acknowledges and reproduces the dialogism—the ineradicable condition of interactivity and responsiveness in all significations—that he sees as the natural condition of language" (qtd. in Hammond, 639). The dialogue between the two women is authentic. This type of forthright disclosure produces the reciprocal activity that Alvarez masters in her multiple narrative styles. The way the sisters are given a turn to speak and lead the conversation of the different chapters is natural. The dialogue between Dede and Alvarez (during the interview) is also natural. That is why it works so successfully. During any conversation, one person takes the lead until the subject pushes another voice to the front of the discourse.

Identity and voice are two main subjects of discourse that weigh heavily on the sister's decision to join the struggle. Alvarez allows each Mirabal sister their individual existence. Each has its own contrasting type of liberty, notwithstanding the family traditions and moral values that

each observes. The identity and voice elements are scrutinized and used by the sisters separately. Alvarez's technique of polyphonic discourse acknowledges each Mirabal daughter as a master of her goal. They each make a decision to join the movement and ascertain their life goal in very distinctively divergent ways and for various reasons. Their resolve comes to bear with contrasting events. Alvarez organizes the occurrences to allow each sister agency. Maria Teresa falls in love with someone already part of the movement when he comes to visit Minerva and Manolo. Upon meeting him she exclaims, "It was the sweetest man's face I'd ever seen" (Alvarez, 141).

Maria Teresa wanted to be a part of whatever mission brought the young man to the home. The young man becomes her "Palomino" and because of him Maria Teresa decides to join the movement,

"I told Minerva and Manolo right out.... I don't want to be babied anymore.

I want to be worthy of Palomino" (Alvarez, 142).

It is Maria Teresa's decision to join the 14<sup>th</sup> Movement for whatever reason, even if the reason is love. Minerva's personality is different, and her independence and aggressive side are shown right from the beginning as she wanted to go to school to become a lawyer. But Maria Teresa had a softer personality and longed for romance. Even though her ideas may not seem strong enough for a revolutionary, Alvarez uses powerful language characteristics for every sister. This authentic language is noted by Bakhtin in how the

"The prose writer does not purge words of intentions that are alien to him,

he does not destroy the seeds of heteroglossia embedded in words,

he does not eliminate those language characteristics and mannerisms

glimmering behind the words and forms" (qtd in Hammond, 644).

Alvarez uses Bakhtin's polyphonic novel in all its forms and pushes the heteroglossia beyond just a simple harmony of voice. Her characters begin to embrace the novel to compromise their contradictions. This meeting of the minds empties a space between the voices. Their cacophony blends and reflects a new objective. Voice is no longer a metaphor. The form, format, and genre in which Alvarez chooses to write extend the significance of power to each sister. The postmodern polyphonic novel allows the multiple voice operation to deliberately flout one sister's authorial control. Each has linguistic stability, and the reader witnesses the combination of identity into one purpose of action; the defiance and defeat of the Trujillo regime. Separate but equal the personality traits of Maria Teresa must be kept absolute to her spirit. No hard-hitting stern determination to fight for what is right. She wanted to join initially because she met a man she wants to date and marry. This is the honesty in Alvarez's telling of the story. Then, Patria has an entirely different episode to extract her loyalty to the struggle. After being released from prison and under continual surveillance Patria was on an outing. Returning to their permanent lodging from the retreat they were allowed to attend, (SIM approval) Patria witnessed a young boy killed. She screamed trying to warn him, "Get down, son!" (Alvarez, 162). This is her turning point. Her language is clear and determined. She describes the horrific scene stating,

"His eyes found mine just as the shot hit him square  
in the back. I saw the wound on his young face as the  
life drained out of him, and I thought, Oh my God,  
he's one of mine!" (Alvarez, 162).

Patria was filled with disgust and anger. This is when she declared, “I’m not going to sit back and watch my babies die, Lord, even if that’s what You in Your great wisdom decide” (Alvarez, 162). Her decision is made; she is joining the 14<sup>th</sup> Movement. In efforts to relay each sister’s message legitimately and pure Alvarez does not infuse the sister’s personalities. According to Bakhtin she uses, a style that

“does not purge words of intention that are alien to it, [she] would acknowledge the inescapable semantic openness of (dialogic) language, and would not attempt to force or control meanings. We might expect it to be playful, hesitant, self-conscious, or diffident — maybe funny, silly, difficult, obscure, evasive, or indirect. A style that “does not eliminate those characteristics and mannerisms glimmering behind words and forms” [and] would ventriloquize in a variety of voices — serious academic language [to] give way to buffoonery, poetry, slang, official pronouncements, song, etc. Bakhtin’s style, as we have seen, is nothing like this. He is clear, purposeful, uniform, and persistent” (qtd. in Hammond 644).

Critic Adam Hammond and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin speak about the way an author presents the language of the characters. The words Alvarez used to form and relate to logical meaning for both Patria and Maria Teresa’s determination to express their newfound passion for the movement not as an afterthought but using characteristics and mannerisms more familiar to their older sister Minerva. The two younger sisters reveal comparable sentiments about the struggle. Although the sisters have equivalent emotions, Alvarez positions their language purposefully. The individual

personal experiences garner dedication and devotion to what was once only Minerva's ambition. Alvarez is clear and resolves to have each of the sister's voices and distinct language produce a newfound appetite for the struggle expressed with singular steadfastness. Each comes to participate in the 14<sup>th</sup> Movement through her own understanding using her own voice. It is the individualized expression that Alvarez expertly sharpens through the idiosyncratic voices of each sister.

### Heteroglossia in *Las Mariposas*

The combining of languages and styles into a form of social speech patterns is the untraditional strategy Alvarez presents with the dialogue of the Mirabal sisters. The term heteroglossia describes the coexistence of varieties within language. It is the presence of two or more voices in a text. Alvarez sets up the arrangement of the girl's voices to present the themes of the novel as components of the struggle. The struggle of the 14<sup>th</sup> Movement began as several young-middle class Dominicans started to oppose the Trujillo regime. Presented with evidence of their defiance, the dictator had many arrested. Manolo (Minerva's husband), Leandro (Maria Teresa's husband), and eventually the sisters (except Dede) were taken into custody. Most were taken to La Cuarenta, Trujillo's prison where they were tortured. The soar of arrests and terror throughout the Dominican Republic generated anti-government emotion. Trujillo, being aware of the hatred mounting against him freed the sisters, but kept the husbands jailed. This set up the heinous crime from which the novel was written. The concept of heteroglossia is based on the polyphonic novel. Bakhtin introduced the description of the concept to substitute for the term polyphony and to denote the heterogeneity of styles, dialogism, and ambivalence in the dialogic discourse of the novel (Petkova, 4). According to Bakhtin,

“The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions” (Bakhtin, 263).

The different viewpoints are structured with complexity by the tone in language initiated in the dialogism Alvarez sought to exhibit. As each sister struggled to join or not to join the struggle Alvarez grants each liberty to articulate concern and empathy for the cause and for their family. Bakhtin finds the prototypes of the conscience in which discourse is dialogic. He asserts “They do not exist separately from their speech but are one with their speech, and, are not presented as objective entities but are presented through their speech (qtd. in Petkova, 6). In choosing to fight against the Trujillo regime Minerva and Dede must fight personal intimate battles as well. Dede, remained an arbiter advising her sisters but holding on to self-doubt. Dede wants to join the struggle with her sisters, but her loyalty to Jaimito (her husband) makes that impossible. Dede is suspicious of Patria’s participation in the movement when she asked Dede if she could bury some boxes in the field in the back of their house. Asking who put her up to it and what the boxes contained Patria immediately confessed. “We’re all in it, if that’s what you mean” (Alvarez, 176). Dede suspects Minerva was the agitator who sent Patria over to ask the favor. Dede had to get permission from Jaimito before she could agree to hide the boxes. This is where the dialogism interacts and contradicts. Patria gives Dede a disconcerted look and Dede says (defensively),

“What? I should go over Jaimito’s head? ..... he’s responsible for this place.”

“But can’t you decide on your own, then tell him?”

Dede was in disbelief.

“That’s what I did,” Patria went on. “I joined, and then I talked Pedrito into joining me.”

“Well, I don’t have that kind of marriage,” Dede said.....

.....” It’s just like you don’t seem yourself”

After Patria’s visit, Dede talked to Jaimito who gave an adamant “no” to storing boxes in the backyard. The language Dede and Patria use is independent and singular. Each has motive and intent to acquiesce because the family relationship is stronger than any problem or disagreement. Minerva was always for the anti-government struggle, but her challenge was internal. After being released from prison she began leading a double life. In a monologue late in the story, Minerva mentally debates her life choices and realizes that in choosing the 14<sup>th</sup> Movement and the fight against the Trujillo regime she lost herself. Her dreams and goals faded and were placed on the back burner. Her home life was sacrificed; her dedication to her family took second place to the needs of the Movement. After all, she had Manolo to consider. He was still in prison, and she had to put on a good face for him. In Minerva’s mental monologue she is thinking . . .

“Outwardly, I was still his calm, courageous *companera*.

Inside, the woman had got the upper hand.

And so, the struggle with her began. The struggle to get my old self back from her. Late in the night, I’d lie in bed, thinking.

You must gather up the broken threads and tie them together” (Alvarez 267).

Patria and Minerva are the prototypes of dialogic discourse. According to Bakhtin these types of prototypes of the conscience do not exist separately from their speech but are one with their speech. Polyphony is characterized by a multiplicity of voices and a diversity of social

speeches and styles (Petkova, 7). The way Dede and Patria exchange thoughts in their conversation, Alvarez affirms their obvious differences in tone. The reader feels the restlessness in the words and even the regret as each sister does not go too far with her protest. Minerva's self-assuredness is tested, and Alvarez permits her internal language to identify her voice of reason. The sister's dialogic elements are used with the authorial speech. The voices of the narrators are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia enters a novel (Bakhtin, 266). The distinctive links between voice and language in the novel provide the discriminate structure that Alvarez intended. What Alvarez did not contemplate was how telling the story of the Mirabal girls would generate their status literally and metaphorically. The family becomes saintly, and their culture continually fosters continuity of revolutionary spirit due to their commitment to the struggle. This method Alvarez explores has "rescued the Mirabal sisters from the realm of myth to place them on the arena of ordinary human existence" (qtd. in Hickman, 118). Because of these strategies, Alvarez has grounded the tale and their human lives are loaded with the elements of postmodern hagiography.

### Postmodern Hagiography

Providing examples of postmodern architecture in history, literary theory, and hagiography Linda Hutcheon defines historiographic metafiction. In the novel, hagiography tells the story of self-reflective historical events. In her book *A Poetics of Modernism*, Hutcheon asserts that cultural enterprises are compromised by attempts to overcome burdens of the past (qtd. in Hickman, 99). The irony, contradiction, and self-reflexivity are endorsements of postmodernism. Because of the historical events in Alvarez's novel scholars have analyzed the work by adopting Hutcheon's understanding of postmodern hagiography. This study endeavors to demonstrate how Alvarez's

hagiographic events situate the construction of this historical narrative. It also demonstrates how the Mirabal sisters are examples of good moral character with genuine motives. As Alvarez gives each of the sisters individual voices their self-reflective motives are perceived as authentic by the reader. The idea that *In the Time of the Butterflies* is written as hagiography may not seem possible. The reality of their situation is Alvarez's characters never sought to conquer the Trujillo regime. They only wanted to join in the fight started by others. They did not investigate nor commence an assault on the government. The sister's involvement began with Minerva's feisty attitude. It was only to follow her that Patria and Maria Teresa's curiosity and life experiences prompted them to become part of the group. Even more interesting is the resolve for writing hagiography. Writing a story about traditional history was not a goal of Alvarez. She attempts to disclose and record the story of the Mirabal girls in honor of their fight. She writes the novel as a literary monument. Author Michael de Certeau identifies this variation of the genre as valid. He states if

“The tale is no less dramatic, but the only transformation concerns the progressive manifestation of destiny. The successive places of the story are essentially divided between a time of trial (solitary struggles) and a time of glorification (public miracles), in a passage from a private to a public sphere. As in Greek tragedy, the outcome is known from the beginning, but with the

The difference that where the law of Greek destiny implied the fall of the hero, here the glorification of God requires the saint's triumph”. (Hickman, 106).

The tale grows from a manifest destiny in which Minerva innocently meets Virgilio Morales (Lio). The two begin a relationship that mostly consisted of playing volleyball with Patria, Dede, Jaimito, and other kids. When the family read in the paper that Lio participated in a

demonstration at the university led by young professors, all of whom were assumed to be members of the Communist party Lio was forbidden to come to the Mirabal home. Ultimately the police begin searching for Lio and he goes into hiding. He writes to Minerva asking her to

“take asylum with him! [His instructions told her] she should drive down to the capital on the presence of seeing the exhibit at the Colombian embassy and refuse to leave” (Alvarez, 83).

The letters were intercepted by her father. She searches his room one day when she was sent there to rest by her mother. Minerva had just found out earlier that day about her father’s indiscretions and was noticeably irritable. While resting in her father’s room she searched his armoire and, in his pants pockets, she discovers Lio’s letters. Her father claimed he hid the letters to protect her. Minerva and her father begin a rift that perpetuates Minerva’s desire for Lio into a longing to take part in the 14<sup>th</sup> Movement. These events are the successive places the story finds a division. Solitary struggles of love between Lio and Minerva become the unmistakable catalyst that drives Minerva forward and activates her strong desire from the private intimate relationship to a public sphere of participation in the resistance to the Trujillo regime. The readers know the outcome of the story before they begin reading it. If they are not familiar with the tale, the first chapter in which Dede speaks to the reporter informs the audience of the tragedy about to unfold.

Just like a Greek tragedy finding out how it happened, or even more pointedly, how did the events occur is how Alvarez capitalizes on hagiography. Where were the seeds of doubt planted in their young adolescent minds? And how does their heroism and the attributes of bravery manifest? They experienced in early life or dissatisfaction in the government when Trujillo insisted the family attend a party,

“This wasn’t an official do but something personal.

In fact, after the last big party, a colonel friend had visited Jaimito's family asking after the tall, attractive woman Don Enrique Mirabal had brought along. She had caught El Jefe's eye" (Alvarez, 90).

It was scenes like this that foreshadowed the tragedy that was coming. Many people disappeared during Trujillo's regime. Minerva knew firsthand of his dirty work as her beautiful friend Lina accepted Trujillo's advances, became pregnant, and was sent away to Miami when the dictator's wife found out and tried to kill Lina with a knife (Alvarez, 23). These were seeds of deceit observed by many, but no one could withstand or deny the advances of such an aggressive tyrant. In which crucible was the revolutionary earnestness of the Mirabal's forged? Even though none of them knew him intimately their bodies were still victimized by the Trujillo regime while their continued efforts to fight tyranny afflicted their human forms. The Mirabal's determination for justice continued to purify their weaknesses with good works. For example, Minerva makes sure her father's second family (he had an affair) can attend college. But also, important to note is the immediate danger of their work that seemed to purge them of selfish desires for recognition or acclaim. They remained true to the cause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Movement. As readers answer these questions and decipher the devotion the girls exhibit, they intuit that the purpose of Alvarez's hagiographic use may not be to glorify themselves as much as to glorify the secular ethics and the determination to promote change that they embody.

### And The Meek Shall Inherit The Earth

This biblical saying taken from Matthew is well known and many assume the term meek means weak or deficient in courage. But it means power under control, and that is exactly what the Mirabal sisters represent. They did not inflate their importance or self-estimation. They were reticent to assert themselves for the 14<sup>th</sup> Movement. An organization they believed would certainly

help their people and take down a monstrous dictator. Alvarez used strategies to overturn the nomological and well-organized version of recording history. Using the traditional process of history writing tends to obliterate identity and voices. Nuances that could highlight the way characters think about themselves, the way they are viewed by the world, and the personality traits that define them can be lost through historical paradigms. “At the same time, authors [can] problematize existing historical paradigms, practices, and assumptions not in order to set another type of myth or monologue in its place, but rather, to create a space of indeterminacy that allows the negotiation of human history” (qtd. from Kirschner, 2). The way Alvarez writes *In The Time of the Butterflies* she creates an open space where it is not enough to recover the female subjects and tell their story. Alvarez thinks about the importance of individual voice and identity and how it is imperative to critically analyze the specificity of women's experiences and interpret them in more complex ways.

Alvarez used the polyphonic novel's strategy of multiple voices as the reader witnesses Minerva, the contentious independent one made vulnerable. Mate with a gentle disposition who gains confidence and identity through the literary speech from the conventions in the device. The polyphonic discourse collaborates with heteroglossia to combine the contrasting languages of the Mirabal sisters. This is illuminated using Bakhtin's description of the novel which highlights the social diversity of speech types. This was used by Alvarez in the dialogue between Dede and Patria. Their encounter expressed family emotions as they deal with their individual realms of reality. All the experiences the Mirabal sisters articulate in the novel relate to the 14<sup>th</sup> Movement. Each sister must decide to join or not to join. The speech patterns are sometimes non-verbal, but each communicates with the other and to the audience with their personal goals and determination to make the right decision. Lastly, postmodern hagiography uses the tale as a means of self-

reflection for Dede. It allows her to use the story to bring understanding to the world about why and how the event occurred. She lived to tell the story and try to understand herself through retelling how her sisters became historical icons.

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