Ethnic American Literatures and Critical Race Narratology

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For many people, especially for people of color, AngloAmerica's racial politics and its racial inequity make it almost impossible to express their pains and grief adequately, resulting in disenfranchised grief as these feelers' emotions are not considered socially permissible. Mario Alberto Zambrano's Chicana protagonist Luz Castillo experiences first-hand that not every account of loss is considered permissible as the society in *Lotería's* storyworld makes her feel as if her emotions are unjustified. Luz's narrative mirrors the harsh circumstances many survivors or trauma face, making her losses both personal and collective experiences. In addition, we have to keep in mind that "[i]f trauma is represented in relation to the intersection of personal and political identities and experiences, then the individual experiences in the [trauma] novel are often a result of larger cultural forces" (Balaev 156). Luz's traumas are represented at the intersections of gender and ethnicity as she is confronted with dual emotional disenfranchisement within her patriarchal Chicanx community and a deeply racist American society. Her narrative thus acts as a painful reminder of the physical and emotional harm caused by silencing those in need of advocacy and how this pain is intensified by factors such as ethnicity, gender, or sexuality. *Lotería's* polychronic narration shows us how ethnic American literature can portray unassimilated trauma in its raw form to ask readers to acknowledge a respective protagonist's pain, but also to, albeit only mentally, accompany them on their journeys of healing.

Time, Trauma, Grief, and the United States

As a concept, "time touches every dimension of our being, every object of our attention – including our attention itself" (Bender and Wellbery 1), and has long been a subject of interest in narrative theory. Amongst the first researchers to draw correlations between time and the novel were Lukács, Pouillon, Jauß, and Bakhtin. Then, in 1980, Gérard Genette famously divided temporal relationships between Fabula and story and separated these relationships into the three types "order, frequency, and duration" in his *Narrative Discourse*.[1] Consequently, most attention in

research has been given to narratives that assign storyworld events to a definite location on the story's timeline as they allow readers to follow a more or less linear temporal continuity.[2] However, as cognitive literary scholar David Herman notes, only a little attention has been paid to "how readers can sometimes be prompted to assign storyworld events not a definite but only a more or less determinate location on the story's timeline" (*Story* 212). His cognitive theory proposes that "[n]arrative representations cue interpreters to draw inferences about a structured time-course of particularized events" (*Basic* 92). In other words, he calls for a stronger focus on how storyworld events are temporally structured and how readers perceive them.

Generally speaking, temporal sequencing allows readers to mentally assign events to a specific moment in a storyworld and representations of event sequences provide some linearity. This means readers expect to conceive "of the narrated events as ordered in time" (Van Fraassen 19) and, as a result, model a storyworld's events chronologically, but this is not possible with every narrative. Herman outlines at least four ways of temporal ordering in narratives, namely "*full* or *unequivocal* ordering (ABC), *random* ordering, *alternative* or *multiple* ordering, or *partial* ordering" (*Story* 213), with the latter two being temporally inexactly coded. For example, through temporal manipulations such as analepsis or prolepsis, the same sequence can be told as BCA or CBA. As a result, anachronic departures prolong a narrative's reach as events can move between past, present, and future, and they can also stretch or narrow a sequence's duration.[3] Since such narratives purposely leave out certain events, they often prompt the question of how or why something in a storyworld happened, fostering readers' emotional investment in a respective storyworld.

Drawing on Herman's research, I hope to show how the use of polychronic narration cues readers' empathetic and emotional responses, while also highlighting the difficulties of narrativizing trauma by depicting storyworld events in an inexactly temporally coded manner. Similar to how polychronic narration's structure invites readers to (re)discover trauma, contemporary literary trauma studies follow Cathy Caruth's theory that:

> trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way it's very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance— returns to haunt the survivor later on.
>
> (4)

Understanding texts through polychronic narration helps to stress that "narrative processes share important features with traumatic processes, that there is a special connection between words and wounds" (Kurtz 8). This connection, in turn, allows to closely examine the "relation between psychic wounds and signification" (Hartman 257). Such a narrative

structure allows the protagonists of these texts to almost mimic the recollection of seemingly unrelated narrative events as each fragmented memory helps to gradually rediscover the original traumatic experience. As a result, readers are invited to imaginatively witness a character's raw and exposed emotions, offering them unparalleled insight into a character's mind. Yet, it was only recently that trauma theorists have agreed on the capability and narratability of trauma.

Seeking a revised understanding of literary trauma theory, Joshua Pederson outlines different prevalent approaches. For the so-called first generation of trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth, Bessel van der Kolk, and Judith Herman, "trauma victims may be unable to verbally explains their own traumas" (Pederson 336). Accordingly, this led to the dominant belief that trauma is unspeakable or unnarratable. Pederson adds that other psychological researchers such as Richard McNally and his team, by contrast, "suggest that trauma victims can both remember *and* describe their traumatic past in detail" (338), and that literature offers a way for them to do so. According to this approach, narrating one's trauma has healing powers, as "[s]peaking trauma pulls it from the realm of painful obscurity and hastens the process of rehabilitation" (338). Because trauma is not easily locatable, its representation in narratives is fragmented and the recovery of trauma may also include some memory alterations: "These alterations do not seem to change the substance of the memory but instead its affect. Time may feel as it's slowing down" (339). In order to closely mirror this affective experience, these temporal distortions also need to be present within literary works dealing with trauma. Finally, Pederson notes that McNally points out that trauma "may warp [memory], and textual depictions of such distortion may be helpful clues in identifying its effects in literature" (340). We can find examples of such distortions not only in Zambrano's *Lotería*, but in other Chicanx and Latinx texts as well.

For Latinx authors, temporal manipulations are frequent narrative devices that invite readers to get a fuller sense of a respective character and their storyworld. In his *A User's Guide to Postcolonial and Latino Borderland Fiction* (2009), Frederick Luis Aldama argues that in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) and Wilfred Santiago's *In My Darkest Hour* (2004), for example, we see how "flashback and flashforward techniques not only provide a shift in temporal rhythm but also give a fuller sense of a protagonist in and through the actions of others he or she encountered in the past" (26). Pam Muñoz Ryan's *Esperanza Rising* (2002) uses these techniques to provide insight into how deeply protagonist Esperanza loves her father and then immediately jumps years forward in time to have her father killed, setting up Esperanza's journey of grief. Alfredo Véa Jr.'s *La Maravilla* (1993) uses temporal manipulations to highlight protagonist Beto's relationship with his deceased grandparent, and how the grown man is still haunted by the emotional trauma he experienced as a young boy in Buckeye Road, a spot-in-the-road of Phoenix,

Arizona. Zambrano's *Lotería*, however, requires a constant interpretative reorientation on the part of readers as its "unfolding opens up ever more complicated questions" (Herman 235). As Luz speaks about her traumas, readers mentally witness the young Chicana experiencing sexual abuse, domestic violence, and the death of her sister Estrella at different moments in her life in an unassimilated manner.[4] They also witness how her intersectional trauma is fed by the negative emotion of grief and its social dimension.

Grief is our human response to a strong experience of loss and this emotion does not differentiate between whether the respective loss entails an actual death or 'just' the sudden loss of a close attachment relation.[5] Unlike the primal emotion of sadness which may last only up to a few hours, grief can be "an enduring state that for most bereaved individuals persists for several weeks and up to several years" (Bonanno, Goorin, and Coifman 798). In addition, this profound and all-compassing loss that 'feeds' grief "typically evokes longer-term coping efforts at ameliorating the enduring emotional upsets as well as myriad concrete disruptions wrought by the loss" (799). In other words, grief can be such a powerful negative force that it metaphorically covers the feeler under a blanket of nothingness. However, grieving does not only mean coping with loss, but this emotion "has [also] been associated with a wide range of negative emotions, such as anger, contempt, hostility, fear, and guilt" (798). Grief, then, is both a powerful negative emotion and the vehicle for other equally powerful emotions.

In general, each experience and understanding of loss is individual, yet most people react along similar trajectories. We can differentiate between the trajectories of chronic grief, recovery, and resilience (Bonnano 7), and while most people react along similar patterns to loss, there are also those losses that are socially stigmatized, and experiencing them may even be considered non-permissible. In other words, grief has a strong social dimension. While grief does not immediately seem to directly influence social spheres, another social emotion, shame does directly influence how we perceive people or how they might perceive is. For Latinxs, experiencing shame can also mean being subject to racialization. Stephanie Fetta reminds us in this context that "racializing Brownness as a shameful form of being is a staple practice in many parts of the United States" (Fetta 10). Similarly, some occasions of the non-permissibility of grief can also be the result of racialization, as someone's skin-color may be the reason their grief is not considered justified.

An "important demonstration of the impact of social norms on individual response to bereavement comes in the form of *disenfranchised grief*" (Gross 6). This means that a feeler's grief is "not recognized by others as 'legitimate' or 'reasonable'. It refers to a situation where a loss isn't openly acknowledged, socially sanctioned, or publicly shared" (6). Such losses can be the loss of a relationship, a pet, socially stigmatized circumstances of death, but also the loss of agency that follows sexual

abuse. In the United States more concretely, we find numerous examples of disenfranchised grief as a consequence of racialization and racism. These include, amongst others, losses experienced by enslaved people, Native American genocide, the increasing number of deaths of young people of color at the hands of white police officers, or the thousands of deaths and losses of migrants along the Mexico-U.S. border. Zambrano's *Lotería* too is a narrative about unrecognized loss, one that reminds readers about the permissibility of grief and why Luz's trauma is part of a larger issue in the United States.

Polychronic Trauma and Luz María Castillo

Lotería is the story of the 11-year-old Chicana Luz María Castillo and how she tries to come to terms with a broken family. Following the accidental death of her older sister Estrella, Luz is taken into custody by child protective services and uses a deck of Lotería cards to revisit some of her memories, trying to understand a past that for readers is still in the making.[6] Zambrano structures his *Lotería* similar to how trauma is represented, in a fractured and unassimilated manner. Instead of a temporally exact narrative, Lotería functions similar to a Lotería deck, like a game of chance. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to play the game, and instead, as Zambrano explains, "[t]here is more than one way to win" (vi), which also holds true for the card's order. For each game, the deck is shuffled before the caller picks a card which also means that the order in which Luz narrates her 53 vignettes is just one of many possibilities of arranging the deck. Supporting this claim, Luz stresses that thinking about the stories the cards helped me remember" (17), which means that each card cues a corresponding memory in Luz's brain and there is no temporal order. As a result, only a few of the 53 vignettes are set in the present and this storyworld's temporality can only be explained to a limited extent through achronological explorations of narrative time as *Lotería* is about both present and pasts and how they influence one another.

   Lotería opens with an initially unidentified first-person narrator apparently confiding in a higher entity while reminding herself to "[l]et the cards help you, mama. *Échale ganas*" (Zambrano 2). She continues by telling this entity that "[m]y name is Luz. Luz María Castillo. And I'm eleven years old. You've known me since before I was born, I'm sure, but I want to start from the beginning. Because who else should I speak to but You?" (2).[7] In this first vignette, "La Araña," readers learn that Luz has been in a government facility for the last few days until she decides whether she wants to go to *Casa de Esperanza* or leave for Mexico with her aunt Tencha.[8] Only in the third vignette, Luz narrates why she is in this facility and that her sister's death is connected to it. Throughout the novel, Luz resorts to her deck of Lotería cards as a means to sort and process her memories.

Each Lotería card has a distinct riddle accompanying it and the cards cue corresponding emotional memories.[9] This is an important detail as, more generally, the act of "memory recall is an embodied event that involves the reinstantiation of an initial memory trace in the broad network of brain regions responsible for its initial encoding and expression," meaning that emotional memories are themselves "attenuated embodied appraisals" (Seeley 156) and Luz's first steps of speaking trauma and healing. Yet, she does so only gradually which goes in line with Davis and Meretoja's claim that a dominant approach for literary trauma studies is to emphasize "*belatedness* as constitutive of the temporal structure of trauma" (3). Trauma is "characterized by a delayed response to an overwhelming event that cannot be processed at the time of its occurrence but manifests itself through intrusive thoughts, flashbacks or nightmares" (4), which *Lotería* depicts through the different Lotería cards.

Within this storyworld, we can distinguish three main temporal settings, namely a distant past (earlier), a near past (indeterminate), and the present (later) (*Story* 212).[10] Earlier refers to Luz's life before living through child sexual abuse, later to the timespan after Estrella's attempted escape from their abusive father, and indeterminate to all events in-between including the disappearance of Luz's mother. Functionally speaking, this mirrors the inexact nature of trauma, as "[n]o narrative of trauma can be told in a linear way: it has a time signature that must fracture conventional causality" (Luckhurst 9). Through Luz's polychronic narration, readers are invited to perceive the events almost simultaneously and as if this is the first time Luz speaks about them, even though they are separate events.[11]

Luz shows herself at her most vulnerable moment in her life as she tries to speak her traumas which means that she is forced to reexperience them. While remembering one's trauma is a deeply painful process, it is necessary to cope and heal because "trauma is only known through repetitive flashbacks that literally re-enact the event because the mind cannot represent it otherwise" (Balaev 151). In the case of *Lotería*, this means that a reader is the first person Luz reports her traumas to and that she directly asks to be heard by us, prompting readers to feel with her pains, losses, and hopes. Luz invites readers to not only closely follow how she rediscovers her traumas, but she also offers them deep insight into her fragile and vulnerable state. In this context, Marinella Rodi-Risberg points out that:

> [w]hile literature is not the only site for exploring the representation of the wound that trauma is, it remains one place where trauma can productively be represented and examined, despite the problems that arise in the course of that representation.
>
> (123)

Piece by piece, Luz enacts the reintroduction of her traumatic memories, offering readers to digest them in small doses. For example, in the vignette

"La Estrella," Luz recounts her sister's tragic death, "La Bandera" depicts the eventually failing journey to Mexico, and "La Luna" has Luz remember a moonlit evening conversation with Estrella. Through these different temporal settings, Zambrano highlights the endurance of trauma and also uses them to employ "broadcast strategic empathy" (Keen). This form of strategic empathy aims to address the widest possible audience, allowing Zambrano to reach both in-group and out-group readers, inviting them to feel with Luz.

Each card of the Lotería deck helps Luz to retrieve a specific memory, but the corresponding emotional memory also "calls upon every reader to feel with members of a group, by emphasizing common vulnerabilities and hopes through universalizing representation" (Keen 71–72). Luz's narrative thus foregrounds that the traumas she experiences cannot be reduced to gender, race, or her being an ethnic 'Other.' *Lotería* is just one example of how Latinx authors employ strategic empathy. As Keen notes more generally, we find "opportunities for character identification emphasizing the commonalities of our embodied experiences, our psychological dispositions, and our social circumstances" (85) in many postcolonial novelists' fictions. *Lotería* separates itself from these examples by employing an *alternative* temporal ordering to represent and examine Luz's wound. This means that readers become immediate witnesses of how Luz gradually reexperiences and reclaims bits and pieces of her trauma until she is able to speak her traumas in this inexactly temporally coded storyworld.

If we try to assign temporal markers to the narrative, we can observe that it technically starts the moment Luz's parents meet in "El Barril," to Luz eventually living at *La Casa de Esperanza* in "La Luna." In this vignette, almost at the end of her narrative, Luz explains that "I'm at *Casa de Esperanza* now, the house where hope lives. *Y me llamo Luz.* My sister *Estrella*, The Star" (Zambrano 263).[12] Readers partially and seemingly randomly learn what happens between these two moments, for example the circumstances of Estrella's death. In "El Cantarito," Luz tells readers that "Estrella was in the ICU ever since that night they came to get Papi" (17), and only in "La Estrella," the forty-fifth vignette, she confesses that she accidentally shot her sister. Luz's narration, her use of Lotería cards, is her reconstructing a nonlinear temporal understanding of how things could ever turn this way. Polychronic narration allows Zambrano to depict each of Luz's traumatic experiences side by side, making it almost appear as if they were happening all at once. Eventually, readers witness the instances in which Luz speaks about her traumas.

In the vignette "El Cotorro," the young Chicana tells her readers that her older cousin Memo blew up his hand with a firecracker, quickly adding that "[m]aybe this was Your way of punishing him" (36).[13] This also triggers another fraction of Luz's trauma, one of child (sexual) abuse, with the perpetrator being her cousin:

> Memo took me to the place between the fence and the coop and he grabbed my hand and put it between his legs, like if he was sharing a secret. And what I felt was a baby's arm. I remember it throbbing in the way a *gallina's* wings tremble when you hold it between your hands. [...] *'Masajéalo,'* he said. *'Despacito.'* His thing got bigger and harder and he licked his lips. Then we heard the back door of a house slam and he pushed me away and ran back to the house.
>
> (36–37)

Even though this is only a brief experience, it still haunts the young girl as she only now, years later, finally opens up about what happened. At first glance, it seems like Zambrano does not 'faithfully' represent such trauma, as Luz barely describes her experience. Emma V. Miller, however, stresses that "[w]riting about the trauma of sexual violence is particularly challenging because it remains a topic that seems to elude the easy grasp of language" (226), suggesting that Luz simply cannot fully speak this first trauma yet.

The trauma of sexual violence may be a particularly challenging topic, but it is also a very prevalent issue in the United States. The CDC calls it "a significant but preventable adverse childhood experience [ACE] and public health problem," adding that "about 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys experience at some point in childhood" (2020). While these numbers themselves are already a gloomy testimony, they only generalize these experiences. When we take a closer look at the numbers for Latinxs, we also get a better understanding of why Luz's traumas too are the result of larger cultural forces. In their study, Ulibarri, Ulloa, and Camacho outline that "[i]t is consistently reported in the literature that compared to other ethnic groups, Latina women and girls are more likely to be abused by male family members or relatives" (406). Unlike in the CDC report, "35% of the women (n = 71) reported some form of sexual abuse experience in childhood or adolescence" (410) and in 31% of these reports, the perpetrator was a family member. Mirroring Luz's fear of the potential reactions from her family, many women in this study stated that they had not disclosed their abuse because of fearing shame, not being believed, or because they did not want to upset their families. Zambrano apparently acknowledges this approach of trauma theory, stating in an interview that:

> I think that any child that has been put through some sort of trauma or is wounded in some emotional way, they need a sort of connection, someone in front of them that they can trust and begin to sort of reveal themselves.
>
> (2013)

Only then, they are able to understand how to eventually move beyond the pain they feel. For Luz, this someone needs to be her reader, since the

first time she tries to speak her trauma she is greeted only by physical violence from her father.

In "El Tambor," set somewhen after Momo's accident, Luz's father José Antonio Castillo confronts his daughter and brutally forces her to confess that she *consented* to Memo sexually abusing her. As Luz speaks about this trauma, she narrates it very carefully and in great detail, offering readers deep insight into her open wound. At the age of seven, "Papi [suddenly] yanked me away from the couch and dragged me by my hair into the kitchen with veins coming out from around his nose" (71), calling her a *putita*, forcing her to confess "that I jacked him off, my own cousin, my own hand. Seven fucking years old! And I had to learn a lesson" (73). Then,

> [h]e grabbed my elbow and banged my head against the wall. Mom stepped in between us but he slapped her so hard she fell over the counter. […] Papi pushed me against the wall, and when I stood up he pushed me again toward the door. I fell down the stairs and caught myself on the concrete outside. That's when I noticed my hand dangling from my wrist like an animal hanging of a branch.
>
> (73)

Very vividly, readers are cued to mentally imagine this horrendous scene which is only one instance of the chronic abuse Luz experiences. This detailed description exemplifies how "to convey the particularity of the event, to engage the reader with the characters so that they feel something personal for them, that this is no longer something that happens to other people, in some other place" (Miller 228). Indeed, there is arguably hardly any reader who can read this passage and not, even only for a second, feel with Luz. José, however, denies his daughter the possibility of speaking about her trauma or openly feeling the loss of her innocence. Fetta reminds us about the powerful grip of shame, as it "marks the shamed despicable, unworthy of society's respect or respect for the self, a situation where one becomes Other to oneself" (9). As José shames his daughter for an experience in which she clearly is a victim, her first trauma becomes 'muted.' Luz does, however, manage to speak this second trauma of domestic violence and physical abuse. Unfortunately, the Castillo women's experiences of domestic abuse and their attempts to report these instances serve as catalyst for Luz's third trauma.

Luz's third trauma concerns the circumstances of how her sister Estrella eventually ended up in the ICU, with Luz only gradually remembering little pieces that eventually lead to this fateful event. This inexactly temporally coding of Luz's narrative supports Caruth's theory that trauma is only locatable through reexperiencing unassimilated memories. This way trauma "returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4), which is illustrated through Luz taking several unrelated attempts to speak about

the factors and cultural issues that lead to her sister's death. In "La Garza," vignette 31, Luz remembers the moment she sees her mother for the last time, noticing Cristina's swollen mouth, as José also physically abuses her. In addition, in "La Luna," vignette 52, Luz already lives at *Casa de Esperanza* and remembers the time she and Estrella watch the moon together. Estrella "said behind the face of the Moon, You were there. […] I looked at her face and saw You, the way she saw You in the Moon" (264). The next moment, Estrella starts singing "'Pena, penita, pena,' and I could almost feel her heart come out of her skin" (264). This brief passage encapsulates Estrella's strong desire to break free from her father's abuse as she voices her deep pain during a time in which the two sisters are not even allowed to grieve their mother's sudden disappearance. Instead, they have to hide their true feelings and 'function' as if their mother never existed in the first place. Then, in "La Maceta," vignette 38, Estrella tries to speak about her own trauma of domestic abuse. Her aunt, however, is clearly victim to toxic patriarchal attitudes, as she responds by justifying her brother's behavior and asking Estrella whether she thinks José is not allowed to hit his own daughter. Similar to Luz, Estrella tries to speak about her trauma to a family member, and she too fails at doing so as Tencha considers Estrella's feelings and trauma as not legitimate. Unlike Luz, however, Estrella runs away and contacts the authorities, desperately trying to reclaim the agency of her body and her own narrative. Yet, what follows is a painful reminder of how horribly wrong the already charged encounters with police for people of color in the United States can go.

In the fateful vignette "La Estrella," Luz finally tries to speak about her third trauma, namely accidentally killing her sister. Two days after Estrella has run off, a white and a Mexican police officer ask about the whereabouts of Luz's mother. Already here, José Castillo raises his voice and shuts the door in the police's faces. Luz continues the recovery of her memory by stating that the officers start yelling, banging at the door, and eventually "[t]hey tried to handcuff him, saying things like he was under arrest for assaulting an officer and for the suspected murder of Cristina María Castillo" (Zambrano 228). What follows next is the careful reconstruction of the anticipation of trauma she experienced at the prospect of potentially losing her (abusive) father:

> I ran to Papi's bedroom and stuck my hand under the mattress and grabbed the rifle. I held it against my chest. […] I walked down the hallway with the rifle aimed toward their voices. The white man must've seen me because I heard him say I had a gun. […] He fell to his knees and said, 'Put the gun down, little girl. Put it down'. […] Papi looked at me, and I knew by the way he looked at me he wanted me to do whatever I had to do.
>
> (229)

In this passage, Luz very vividly experiences "repetitive flashbacks that literally re-enact the event because the mind cannot represent it otherwise" (Caruth 17). She invites readers to mentally join her as she slowly navigates through the house, first to the bedroom, and then back to her father, who supposedly 'asks' her to do whatever it takes to protect *el patron* while he quickly grabs a knife himself.[14] The next thing Luz remembers is how

> Estrella ran inside, waving her arms, screaming, 'DON'T! DON'T!'. But my finger felt stuck around the trigger and the officer grabbed the barrel and I pulled, and he pulled, and then the sound was so loud it knocked me down.
>
> (Zambrano 230–231)

Piece by piece, Luz re-enacts and relives the painful memory of how she kills her own sister.

   While this memory shows the brute force Luz experienced, the reenactment also starts the healing process for the young Chicana. As Luz speaks about her trauma, she effectively pulls "it from the realm of painful obscurity and hasten[ing] the process of rehabilitation" (Pederson 338) and by revealing her deepest feelings, Luz offers her readers insight into her open wound. She recounts how "when I lifted my head I saw her on the ground with her cheek on the floor and her hair over her face. My mouth opened but no sound came out" (Zambrano 231).[15] Luz confesses that this moment felt as "if I were sinking and something was filling my ears, and the sounds were beginning to fade, except for Papi screaming," concluding that "all I can remember, all I could see were the stars" (231). Through stressing the duration of this moment and through the detailed descriptions, Zambrano strategically invites all kinds of readers to feel along with this young Chicana, inviting them to imaginatively perceive these events as if they were happening to someone close to them. Considering the horrifying numbers of police killings of young people of color such as Ma'Khia Bryant, Daunte Wright or Adam Toldeo, Luz's experience might resonate even more forcefully with readers, reminding them that literature both reflects and affects the real world. Importantly, this third trauma that Luz speaks closely intersects with racial basis, police killings, and racial violence, pointing to a much larger cultural trauma in place. Although each one of Luz's traumas manifests at a different moment in time and even though they are themselves independent events, *Lotería*'s polychronic narration invites readers to perceive them as if they were taking place almost simultaneously. This fractured and unassimilated narration, in turn, allows Luz to represent and re-enact her traumas in their raw unassimilated bits and pieces, initiating her healing process along the way.

Conclusion

Luz María Castillo is a survivor of three different traumas, with each one of them attesting to another larger cultural force in the United States. First, Luz fails to speak about her trauma of sexual violence, as her initial attempt to speak about it with her family results in Luz suffering another trauma. However, she also does not fully comprehend what really happened with her cousin which is also why her mind cannot yet fully represent this trauma. In addition, Luz's experience of sexual abuse points toward the stark presence of 'rape-culture' and 'victim-blaming.' These practices are even more prevalent for women of color as they are intensified because gender and ethnicity intersect and they might even prevent survivors from speaking their traumas as survivors may be too afraid that seeking justice might cause them further physical, economic, or social harm. Luz's second trauma, child abuse, is narrated slowly and carefully, inviting readers to perceive this trauma so intimately that it becomes something that could happen to them or someone close to them as well. Official reports stress the wide-reaching harm of this crime and Zambrano uses polychronic narration to showcase the unassimilated nature of this trauma and how it is not locatable in the original event. This trauma, too, is of intersectional nature, as we have seen above that the numbers concerning experiencing forms of abuse and violence are significantly higher for Latinas than for the United States as a whole. In addition to 'rape-culture' and 'victim-blaming,' the causes for this trauma are disenfranchised grief, and too little regard for the body of females and people of color more generally. Finally, Luz's third trauma, the accidental shooting of her sister, happens for the same reason racial violence and injustice occur so frequently in the lives of people of color, because of a system of institutionalized racism.

Functionally, polychronic narration creates a narrative that allows Luz to speak about her different traumas almost simultaneously, irrespectively of *when* they actually take place. *Lotería* highlights that disenfranchised grief triggered by experiences of trauma cannot be told in a straightforward manner since the nature of trauma necessitates inexactly temporally coded narratives. This raw depiction of Luz's emotions invites readers to empathetically engage with the young Chicana and her experiences, as she asks them to mentally accompany her on her quest to (re)discover each fragment of her memory, experiencing each moment as if it were to happen for the first time. Through this narrative strategy, Luz asks readers to mentally share her pains but also aid her in reclaiming the agency over her racialized body as well as her narrative. This way, readers are invited to acknowledge the young Chicana's pain, loss, grief, and the permissibility of her narrative, while they are also reminded that each one of the traumas Luz experiences is a testimony to a larger, overarching prevalent issue in the United States.

Notes

1 According to Genette,

> [t]o study the temporal order of a narrative is to compare the order in which events or temporal sections are arranged in the narrative discourse with the order of succession the same events or temporal segments have in the story, to the extent that story order is explicitly indicated by the narrative itself or is inferable from one or another indirect clue.
>
> (35)

2 Scheffel, Weixler, and Werner outline that readers' perception of time is also understood "as the reader's mental construct. Temporal aspects play a crucial role on both receptions orientated theories and cognitive theories of narration" (2014).

3 Herman points out that "[i]n functional terms, proleptic storytelling, by eliminating or reducing narrative suspense, requires an interpretative reorientation on the part of readers" (217).

4 In this context, Balaev observes that "[a]uthors employ a nonlinear plot or disruptive temporal sequences to emphasize mental confusion, chaos, or contemplation as a response to the experiences" (159).

5 Indeed, "a broadly similar reaction can occur when a close relationship is ended through separation, or when a person is forced to give up some aspect of life that was important" (Archer 1).

6 While *El Gallo* does not have an own vignette, Luz reveals its significance in *El Nopal*. She states that "in the way that The Star needs The Moon, Luz needs *El Gallo* and so maybe without him I don't have a voice" (Zambrano 177), clearly suggesting that she cannot yet fully articulate her trauma.

7 In an interview with Diane Rehm, Zambrano has revealed that the 'You' Luz speaks to is some sort of "divine presence, a you, a personal god. She's sort of trying to wake herself up or have someone else wake her up from this nightmare that she's been put in" (2013).

8 Tencha is Luz's father's sister and unlike Luz, she is not a legal citizen of the United States. In fact, we later learn that she never applied for a green card despite living in the United States for decades.

9 Emotional memories are "memories that retrieve an emotion when activated; emotional memories are themselves implicit, though they are often activated along with associated explicit memories of particular events" (Hogan 179).

10 This setting follows Herman's argument that "polychronic entails a three-value system spanning Earlier, Later, and Indeterminate, where, again, Indeterminate is shorthand for Indeterminately-situated-vis-á-vis-some-temporal-reference-point-X" (*Story* 212–213).

11 Such "more and less nonchronological representation of events can point up causal or other interconnections between occurrences that readers might be otherwise inclined to model as separate, unrelated" (*Story* 217).

12 The narrative ends roughly around three weeks after Luz shoots Estrella. "The day we left [the facility] you'd never know I was there for three weeks" (Zambrano 254), Luz explains before she runs from her aunt Tencha at the U.S.-Mexico border and then later moves into *Casa de Esperanza*.

13 One possible interpretation of this card's meaning refers to truth. This is the one truth Luz has tried to tell but has been silenced ever since.

14 One might argue that one reason why this police encounter escalates too quickly is due to the Castillo family's ethnicity, which is even supported by the fact that Luz mentions how the Mexican officer tries to speak to José in Spanish, presuming he does not know English.

15 Zambrano states in an interview that Luz does not speak because "[s]he's been traumatized in selective mutism of keeping quiet" (Rehm 2013).

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