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## “Healing a Hurting Heart”: FEMRITE's Use of Narrative and Community as Catalysts for Traumatic Healing

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“Healing a Hurting Heart”: FEMRITE’s Use of  
Narrative and Community as Catalysts  
for Traumatic Healing

Candice Taylor Stratford

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

### “Healing a Hurting Heart”: FEMRITE’s Use of Narrative and Community as Catalysts for Traumatic Healing

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FEMRITE, the Ugandan Women Writers Association, was created in 1996, and over the last twenty years, it has become the largest and most successful women’s writing group in East Africa and one of the most influential literary communities on the African continent. It has become an essential element of Ugandan literary society, and a large proportion of its writings reflect various forms of trauma, begging an engagement with trauma theories. I will argue that through strategies of narrative recuperation and the establishment of communities, FEMRITE has created avenues for women writers, their subjects, and their readers to engender healing from trauma. After discussing FEMRITE’s social programs, such as interviewing war refugees or AIDS victims, I will analyze two texts by FEMRITE author Beatrice Lamwaka to demonstrate the manifestations of trauma and the ways it is narrated, as well as the way Lamwaka uses narrative and community in working through her own trauma. Through an analysis of its organizations and publications, I hope to show that FEMRITE represents a uniquely optimistic and socially persuasive approach to trauma and healing.

Keywords: trauma, Uganda, Women and Literature, FEMRITE, African Literatures

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I dedicate this to my mom and dad for their example and to my children for their patience. Most of all, I dedicate this to my husband for his unfailing faith in me, and for helping me believe I could do it.

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“Healing a Hurting Heart”: FEMRITE’s Use of  
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## Introduction

In 1996, a group of Makerere University English professors and students organized FEMRITE, the Ugandan Women Writers Association, to increase the number and visibility of women writers in Uganda. In the last twenty years, FEMRITE has become the largest and most successful women’s writing group in East Africa and one of the most influential literary communities on the African continent. From its inception, FEMRITE’s primary goal has been to nurture women writers by building a community of support, networking, and publishing. By all accounts, and despite funding shortages, it has been remarkably successful, publishing more than two dozen novels, short story anthologies, and volumes of poetry.<sup>1</sup> It also promotes a number of other literary activities of which publishing is only one component. When funding is available, FEMRITE has held yearly Writers’ Residencies, from which an anthology is published. It also periodically organizes reading tents to promote literacy in school children, visual art and poetry collaborations, and a writer’s caravan that travels around the country, attending public readings in writers’ home villages (Kushaba, Interview). All these events increase the visibility of women authors, counter traditionally sexist attitudes about women, and encourage public involvement in the arts.

FEMRITE’s mission from the beginning has been to create “a community of published women writers contributing to national and international development through creative writing” (Bwogi). In this spirit of development and progress, writers have come to FEMRITE often with the aim of not only honing their craft, but of exposing injustices suffered by Ugandan women, and with hopes of changing Ugandan society. Founding

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<sup>1</sup> For a full list of publications, see Appendix A.

member Margaret Ntakalimaze stated: “That’s why we are writing books, for human rights [activists] to act upon such kinds of issues.” While not all of the younger and newer FEMRITE authors exhibit such an overtly political stance, FEMRITE nonetheless believes in a fundamentally symbiotic relationship between community, writing, and socio-political change.

This relationship between community, writing, and change is particularly evident when we engage FEMRITE within the field of trauma studies. Trauma has traditionally been defined as what happens to a person’s psyche when presented with the physical or emotional violence of what Dominick LaCapra calls a limit event: “an event that goes beyond the capacity of the imagination to conceive or anticipate it” (133). Because the victim cannot understand her traumatic experience through the constructs offered her by society, the trauma intrudes on everyday life and isolates her from her social communities. Traumatic events, by altering the sufferer’s apperception of social rules and contexts, also alters her ability to make meaning from her experience, thereby affecting how and what she is able to narrate about the traumatic experience. Narration of trauma is one of the hallmarks of FEMRITE publications. In its commitment to women’s issues, its publications reveal trauma as unfortunately typical of the lives of Ugandan women, due to war, poverty, patriarchy, and AIDS. The same publications also reveal the disruption of community that such trauma engenders. Trauma is not an uncommon theme in African writing generally,<sup>2</sup> but what makes FEMRITE unique is its optimism for the possibility of healing. Healing, for FEMRITE, is achieved through the act of testimony—speaking or writing one’s traumatic experience to a willing listener. Testimony not only allows the sufferer to work through her trauma, but for FEMRITE, it also becomes the tool by which isolated individuals suffering from trauma are reintegrated into

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<sup>2</sup> For an insightful analysis of African trauma novels, see Robert Eaglestone’s article “‘You Would Not Add to My Suffering If You Knew What I Had Seen:’ Holocaust Testimony and Contemporary African Trauma Literature.”

their existing communities or absorbed into new ones. Communities—new or old—are significant in the process of healing from trauma, as they allow for the creation or recreation of emotional relationships with others and counter the isolation trauma inevitably causes. FEMRITE does this both on a personal level, by inviting women to record their traumatic experiences either in their own hand, or through oral interviews, and on a literary level, by publishing the narrations of women and their trauma. Thus, studying FEMRITE as a community of writers responding to trauma becomes an exercise in peeling back layers; layers of narrative, including personal, fictional, and cultural; and layers of community, defined by family, social, experiential, ethnic and national identities. I hope to show that the FEMRITE organization and its literature illustrate the many layers of narration and community available for the process of working through trauma.

In order to understand the importance of narrative and community in the healing of trauma, I will begin by giving an overview of the foundational trauma theories that inform my analysis, incorporated with an analysis of how the FEMRITE organization enacts healing from trauma. Although a survey of the entire FEMRITE corpus and the lives of its writers is beyond the scope of this current project, I hope to show through representative examples the ways in which FEMRITE offers possibilities for women to heal from trauma by narrating their experiences, as well as offering opportunities to join, create, or reattach themselves with various communities through its social-literary programs. Then I will turn to one of its authors, Beatrice Lamwaka, as both a literary and personal case study of how narrative recuperation and the re-creation of community can effect healing. Lamwaka's engagement with the traumatic effects of war, privation, and violence mirrors the preoccupations of much of FEMRITE's published works, whose subjects include rape, domestic violence, incest, sexism, poverty, and political injustice. However, Lamwaka's writing is also rooted in the particularities of Acholi experience and in her own concerns about silence and witnessing. I



will analyze her short story “Butterfly Dreams” and her personal memoir “The Garden of Mushrooms” to show the forms in which trauma appears and the ways in which narrative is employed in these stories, as well as how Lamwaka herself uses narrative and community in working through her own trauma.

#### Theorizing FEMRITE’s Mission

Scholars and medical practitioners have studied trauma as a category since the late nineteenth century, but groundbreaking studies by Cathy Caruth, Kali Tal, Dominick LaCapra and others in the late twentieth century have broadened the application of trauma as a theory into a variety of disciplines. In literary theory, trauma has been primarily characterized by postmodern aesthetics, wherein psychological trauma symptoms are translated into formal literary elements, including “interruptions, compulsive repetition of telling and retelling, and various modes of disjunction, as of style, tense and focalization” (Visser 277). Additionally, trauma literature has been heavily influenced by Cathy Caruth’s adoption of Freudian aporia—an impasse or paradox from which there is no escape—and its resulting melancholy. While a number of scholars have countered this Caruthian fatalism, Western trauma literature is nevertheless regularly characterized by the endless repetition and re-inscription of trauma, preventing healing for the sufferer.

Since 2007, however, postcolonial scholars have scrutinized the postmodern and Eurocentric bias of trauma studies, categorizing the theory as overly prescriptive and exclusionary. J. Roger Kurtz questions the global applicability of a theory whose three main elements—psychoanalysis, deconstructionist theory, and the Holocaust—all have “roots in the experiences and intellectual traditions of Western Europe” (422). This Western intellectual foundation also has prevented universal application of trauma theory by excluding texts that do not focus “on ahistorical, structural trauma and melancholia” or “on formal criteria of narrative rupture and aporia” (Visser 277). Postcolonial scholars have

instead begun examining non-Western texts for the “cultural and historical specificity” with which they represent trauma, arguing that, in fact, non-Western literatures represent trauma in significantly different ways (Rothberg xii). Some of these differences are evident in the literature of FEMRITE and the writing of Beatrice Lamwaka, particularly the use of faith, religion and ritual as means for managing trauma, and the connection between individual and community in identity formation. While many FEMRITE texts do in fact use postmodern formal aesthetics to represent trauma, we now understand that these elements represent less of a universal standard than they do the permeability of contemporary cultural and intellectual boundaries.

The last ten years of postcolonial trauma studies have led Michael Rothberg to summarize the limitations of classical trauma theory as three-fold: the first limitation he labels “fragmented modernist aesthetics,” which refers to the postmodern and Eurocentric bias I discussed above; Rothberg also cites a problematic emphasis on “events and not systems” and trauma theory’s “assumption of privileged, secure subject positions” (xii). In fact, FEMRITE literature emphasizes the converse of these, often presenting a straightforward discourse that highlights the experiences of marginalized subjects, particularly women, stuck in socio-political circumstances that create systems of repetitive trauma. Rothberg contends that trauma studies has traditionally been preoccupied with individual subjects capable of working through their trauma, or at least capable of considering how they are acting it out. Non-privileged, non-secure subjects such as impoverished women have little recourse to the literature, music, or psychotherapy that privileged subjects may use in order to come to terms with their trauma.<sup>3</sup> Rather, “confronting and working through the past is not necessarily first in the minds of trauma

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<sup>3</sup> For an excellent discussion of poverty-based systemic trauma in West Africa, see Aisha Fofana Ibrahim’s “Connecting Testimony, Trauma, and Memory: The Sierra Leone Experience.”

survivors preoccupied with the importance of feeding families, finding a home, and returning to work” (Novak 49). As one of its primary goals, FEMRITE often explores through its literature and through its programs the systemic trauma of women living at subsistence levels, with no recourse to the luxury of working through the traumatic systems in which they are trapped. This concept of systemic trauma is particularly useful for our understanding of FEMRITE literature, because recognizing the existence of trauma systems demands equal recognition of the trauma’s structural, political or social sources.

In their emphasis on narration and community as crucial tools for working through traumatic experience, trauma theory and its postcolonial revisions seem to apprehend the nature of trauma in the same manner as the FEMRITE organization and its publications. From its inception, FEMRITE had addressed systemic traumas that victimize women. Its original goal was simply to rectify publishing inequalities for female Ugandan writers, but its mission soon expanded to include promoting the wellbeing of all East Africans, especially women. As I mentioned above, its many programs seek to fight injustice, sexism, and violence in all its forms. But FEMRITE’s unique ability to address trauma is reflected in its self-assignment as “a community of published women writers contributing to national and international development through creative writing” (Bwogi). Dissecting this mission statement reveals the four foundational elements of the FEMRITE organization: women, writing, community, and social development. The first of these elements requires little discussion; while FEMRITE encourages the involvement of men in its programs, and even publishes some stories and poems by men, its membership and primary publishing opportunities are available only to women. As such, its principal focus is on the experiences of women. Understanding the other three elements, however—writing, community, and social development—are integral to understanding how FEMRITE works to enact healing.

Writing—and its broader category of narration—has been a significant aspect of trauma studies since the 1992 publication of Felman and Laub’s *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. It emphasizes the role of testimony as a way of externalizing and recontextualizing trauma, countering the perpetual melancholy of Caruthian trauma. Other researchers and critics have found that narrativization can have profoundly positive results for trauma sufferers. James Pennebaker’s pioneering experiments with writing therapy found that “the mere act of disclosure is a powerful therapeutic agent that may account for a substantial percentage of the variance in the healing process” (162). James Berger has argued that narrative allows the mind to begin to process what before has been unspeakable: “Because trauma shatters the narratives that structure our lives, we can only be healed by telling our stories again, by representing in words the trauma that now controls our mental images, thoughts, [and] actions” (qtd. in Ibrahim 260). Through narrativization, the sufferer circumvents the disruptive nature of trauma; just as traumatic experiences break the social codes one relies on for meaning, testimony about the trauma allows the sufferer to formulate a new world with new social codes, accounting for trauma’s existence in it. Suzette Henke, drawing heavily on the foundational work of Felman and Laub, applies the concept of narrative recuperation to various twentieth century women writers who engaged in “life-writing” through fiction, nonfiction, and journals. She names this kind of writing “scriptotherapy . . . the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic reenactment” (xii).<sup>4</sup> These various terms for

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<sup>4</sup> There are some postcolonial scholars who reject the concept of narrative recuperation, primarily because of the systemic nature of postcolonial trauma. Stef Craps considers writing as therapy “an inadequate response” to the systemic forms of trauma prevalent throughout Africa (57). While I agree that it is unlikely that structurally-mandated trauma will be resolved because one sufferer decides to write about her trauma, that does not negate the healing that can occur for the individual writer or reader. Additionally, Margaret Mahon argues that Senegalese authors with personal experiences of significant trauma “display skepticism about the ability of literature to lead to healing” (12). Instead, writing becomes a default activity because the author “found no one with whom they could initially share their

writing-to-heel—narrativization, narrative recuperation, life-writing, and scriptotherapy—all describe the same process of using writing as a way of recontextualizing trauma in a manner that allows for progress toward healing.

Writing is the core activity around which FEMRITE operates. One only has to read its publications to realize the way trauma permeates much of the female Ugandan experience. While many of these authors may not experience traumatic events themselves, their stories nevertheless emphasize traumatic stories with which they are familiar. In an interview I conducted with FEMRITE author Barbara Oketta,<sup>5</sup> we discussed the background to her story “The Running Dream.” During her work as a schoolteacher, one of her female students was molested by her stepfather, and when she became pregnant, she was turned out of the house by her mother, neglected by the school and the police, and eventually died in childbirth. Oketta relates, “I was very angry over that. I said, ‘She didn’t have to die’ . . . I don’t know what happened . . . I think trying to deal with that, I wrote that story” (Interview). For Oketta, writing became a way of working through her anger and sadness for another woman’s trauma. Other FEMRITE writers, however, have experienced extensive trauma in their own lives. Monica Arac de Nyeko was a young girl when members of her extended family were slaughtered in the civil war in the north, and many of her stories about the civil war reflect a profound sense of loss. De Nyeko stated, “The periods of my life where I encountered the most loss was where I had the biggest parts of writing,” signalling that, like Oketta, the writing became a way of refiguring a world disrupted by loss and pain, reorganizing previously incomprehensible experiences into comprehensible ones.

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stories face-to-face” (14-15). Again, while narrative recuperation may be only a default solution for some, that does not negate its value for healing.

<sup>5</sup> In May 2014, I had the privilege of interviewing twenty-one female and two male authors connected to FEMRITE. Each interview lasted approximately an hour and touched on various aspects of the author’s life, including his or her education, family life, writing, and involvement in FEMRITE. For a full list of interviews, see Appendix B.

Aside from the FEMRITE authors themselves, FEMRITE also encourages the narrative recuperation of women who otherwise would have little recourse to sharing their stories. FEMRITE has created opportunities for these women to narrate their experiences to FEMRITE members, who then write and publish the stories in a volume of essays. These have included *Tears of Hope* (2003), stories of women who “have had their human rights violated simply because of their gender” (Wangusa); *I Dare to Say* (2007), about women living with HIV/AIDS; ‘*Today You Will Understand: Women of Northern Uganda Speak Out*’ (2007), a joint publication with IRIN Radio Project of interviews with women living in IDP camps in Northern Uganda, whose interviews were also broadcast on local radio stations; *Beyond the Dance* (2009), stories of women in the Kapchorwa region of Uganda who are subject to female genital mutilation; and *Farming Ashes* (2009), essays by and about women who have suffered from the civil war in the north.

These interview projects were formulated as a program of collecting and sharing the stories of trauma, and unfortunately for our purposes here, their publications rarely reflect on the impact that sharing these stories may have had on the women who narrated them.

However, from my interviews with FEMRITE authors, it is undeniable that their traumatic stories have had a profound effect on the authors to whom the stories were narrated. Jocelyn Ekochu remembers two stories. The first was part of the *Tears of Hope* project, where she interviewed a mother whose daughter was kidnapped by a man with AIDS. The police tried to help get her daughter back, but because she was not a man, and had no husband to speak for her, the woman had little legal recourse and was unable to retrieve her daughter. After eleven years, Ekochu still remembers that interview as “so emotional, it was so emotional” that “I think I was running the risk of being absorbed into it.” The other story Ekochu remembers was about a young woman forced into circumcision, who, as an adult, is now paralyzed due to complications from the procedure. Reflecting on these experiences, Ekochu

echoed what she called the sentiments of criminal investigators, saying “It is at such times as these that I hate my work. Those are the times when I say ‘Oh my god, am I supposed to be doing this?’ But what spurs me on is that these stories must be told. The world must know that all is not well on the ground.” Many other FEMRITE authors I interviewed expressed similar emotions related to the process of interviewing. Their experiences meeting and witnessing the traumatic stories of women from around Uganda have become a permanent part of their own identity, impacting their own lives and the stories they write.

The third element of FEMRITE’s mission is community, which, according to the recovery philosophy of psychiatrist Judith Herman, is an inextricable part of the healing process. Narrative recuperation breaks the bonds of isolation that inevitably result from trauma; witnessing can hardly occur without a listener. The narrator and her listener(s) are connected through the shared experience of witnessing. The members of this shared experience become a community of sorts, which can allow the sufferer at least “some social acknowledgment if not acceptance” (Vikroy 19). Communities can comprise a wide variety of individuals and be of disparate sizes, and they fulfill the basic emotional human need for attachment that Herman contends must be met in order to allow for healing. As we will see in Lamwaka’s writing, one who is traumatized can attempt to either recreate old communities that existed before the trauma occurred or she can attempt to create new ones. These communities include intimate partnerships, family relationships, neighborhood associations, ethnic societies, and national identities. Connecting and reconnecting with these communities happens in a variety of ways—in the intimacy of physical space, in the felt obligation of proximal relations, and in Benedict Anderson’s conception of imagined communities—ethnic and national groups with which we identify.

FEMRITE creates a number of different communities through its programs and publications. First and foremost, it creates communities of women who share the writing

experience through yearly writer's residencies and weekly workshops. Helen Moffet, the facilitator of FEMRITE's 2008 Regional African Women Writers Residency, described the community she experienced at the Residency: "The sum of the whole was greater than the parts, as we talked and shared and wrote and were deeply refreshed and inspired. It is not possible to convey the chemistry in the room as we worked together, read each other's writings and supported one another" (Moffet v). The inspiration gleaned from this sort of writerly community was reiterated again and again in the interviews I conducted. When asked, "Without FEMRITE do you think you would have been a writer?" Beatrice Lamwaka responded, "Maybe, but maybe just written and kept them at home . . . even if I had written one short story and it got published, and then I didn't have FEMRITE anymore, I don't think . . . Because it's so tough" (Interview). The need for support from other writers, particularly in a traditionally patriarchal culture, has created a sisterhood from which women can draw encouragement to continue to write. FEMRITE's office and research space also allows its members to make their own smaller, more personal communities of friendship as they interact on a daily basis. Monica Arac de Nyeko describes it as a place

where these girls could leave home in the morning and come, and have these dreams so unrealistic, but which were not, because you met other people who wanted the same thing, and you didn't feel so alone. And we drank tea and had [dinner] and we read each other's stories. We upset each other, we uplifted each other, and we showed each other what was possible. And we kept writing, and I think that is what FEMRITE did. (Interview)

Current FEMRITE Treasurer Barbara Oketta stated, "at FEMRITE, you feel welcome and warm and loved and important and nurtured and cherished . . . That's why it's home for me now" (Interview). Current member Betty Kituyi also described the emotional void that FEMRITE has filled for her, saying, "as a woman I'm lonely." But "in FEMRITE, I found a



kindred spirit, you know? . . . And I wish that every Ugandan woman would just have the privilege of meeting like-minded women.”

The FEMRITE community has become a place where women feel safe to tell their stories, and they have tried to enlarge that community of trust across Uganda through their interview projects. Not only have these interviews created opportunities for women to narrativize their trauma, but the projects have also created new communities between these women and the authors who interviewed them. Barbara Oketta, despite being an ethnic Acholi, had never lived in Acholiland and couldn't speak Acholi, so she jumped at the opportunity to travel to the north to interview Acholi women displaced by the civil war. Her interviews gave her insight into the trauma experienced by the Acholi; she said, “When you finally meet someone who went through it, it becomes real to you. It stops being a news article.” For Oketta, the most valuable part of the interview experience was the creation of community ties that continue to affect her years later. It was an opportunity to “reconnect with my people more on a personal level, and I think their stories, I learn from them on a daily basis. They help me correct myself on a daily basis.”

The fourth fundamental component of FEMRITE's mission is to promote social development. Political awareness and a drive for social change characterize the majority of FEMRITE literature, even though it is often subtly displayed within a domestic and more traditionally female domain. African literature in the colonial and postcolonial period has often been political in nature. Simon Gikandi noted that he “grew up and was educated in a tradition where literary works were being asked to do important political work, or ethical work, or moral work, or religious work” (qtd in Kurtz 426). FEMRITE has continued this tradition of literary social responsibility with a firm belief that literature can improve the lives of women. FEMRITE has always positioned itself as a catalyst for social change, because “for these women, the act of writing becomes a political vehicle to address women's issues

and concerns” (Spencer 2). FEMRITE fiction, then, often exhibits a moralistic or didactic flavor,<sup>6</sup> as authors make male characters who do violence to women suffer for their crimes, and their stories draw attention to the oppressive systems of patriarchy and violence that traumatize women. FEMRITE’s social programs and the publications that result from them often demand—as the editors did in the Foreword to *Tears for Hope*—“all policy makers, legislators and persons in authority at all levels . . . to take deliberate action to reverse the situation” (Wangusa).

FEMRITE’s emphasis on narration, community, and social change is a culturally specific approach to countering the trauma of the women within its influence. Studying FEMRITE provides a uniquely Ugandan context in which to understand the power of narrative recuperation in the face of systemic trauma, as well as the many levels at which community is necessary for traumatic healing.

#### The Power of Narrative and Community

I turn now to FEMRITE’s literature. I will analyze “Butterfly Dreams” and “The Garden of Mushrooms” by Beatrice Lamwaka to show how narrative recuperation and the (re)creation of various communities combat the silence and isolation trauma engenders to create opportunities for healing. These stories, combined with Lamwaka’s statements from our interview, reveal the importance of narration and community in her fiction, as well as in her personal life.

“Butterfly Dreams” and “The Garden of Mushrooms” are set during the most recent Ugandan military conflict, a devastating guerilla insurgency by Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) against President Museveni’s Uganda People’s Defense Force

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<sup>6</sup> Although FEMRITE literature is often more didactic and moralistic than African literature published and distributed in Europe and America, Robert Eaglestone finds similar sentiments in other African texts. Eaglestone contends that African literature doesn’t struggle with incomprehensibility or unspeakability to the same degree as Holocaust literature, but instead straightforwardly presents trauma as a problem to be solved (“You Would Not Add”).

(UPDF), stretching primarily from 1987 until 2006. Because Kony and much of his army are ethnic Acholi, and the majority of crimes both by the LRA and the UPDF have been perpetrated upon the Acholi people, Acholiland has seen large-scale environmental destruction and a fracturing of the Acholi community. The LRA's guerrilla tactics have been brutal, and the UPDF has answered in kind, with human rights violations and atrocities committed on both sides, including rape, abduction, torture, mutilation, and murder. One of the most appalling aspects of the conflict has been the abduction and forced conscription of civilians by the LRA, including thousands of children. After their conscription, these children are often forced to perpetrate atrocious crimes on friends and family in order to preserve their own lives. The LRA has also abducted young girls to serve as "wives" to the LRA officers. With more than one hundred thousand people dead, thirty thousand children abducted ("Key Statistics"), and ninety percent of Acholi removed from their homes to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps (Latigo 94), the ethnic Acholi society has experienced a collective trauma still taking its toll today.<sup>7</sup>

Lamwaka's "Butterfly Dreams" illustrates the lasting devastation of this war on individuals and communities—families, villages, and the Acholi—by telling the story of Lamunu, an Acholi girl who returns to her family after being abducted by LRA rebels. Lamunu's family, after listening for five years to daily radio reports of the lists of liberated child soldiers, finally hears Lamunu's name and rejoices that she will be returning home. But the homecoming is not the joyful reunion for which they had hoped. Narrated by Lamunu's sister, we learn that Lamunu returns not only with an emaciated and scarred body, but also

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<sup>7</sup> For further reading about the LRA see Tim Allen and Koen Vlassenroot's *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality* (2010). Sverker Finnström's *Living with Bad Surroundings: War, History, and Everyday Moments in Northern Uganda* (2008) analyzes the effect of the war on Acholi individuals and society. There are also a significant number of child-soldier memoirs and novels, highlighting the prevalence of narrative as a response to trauma. Some of these include Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone* (2007), Uzodinma Iweala's *Beasts of No Nation* (2005), Ahmadou Kourouma's *Allah Is Not Obligated* (2007), and Dave Eggers' popular, "experimental non-fiction novel" *What Is the What* (2007) (Cowley).

with a damaged mind. All but completely mute, Lamunu is unable to speak of her experiences, her feelings, or even of everyday things. Perhaps due to Lamunu's silence, her family also finds it impossible to speak to her: they cannot tell her about the death of her father, they are afraid to ask questions about Lamunu's years away, and they are unable to tell their own stories about how things at home have changed so dramatically. After a difficult period of emotional isolation from one another, Lamunu decides to go back to school, and when her mother works out a way to pay the school fees, Lamunu finally breaks the painful silence with "apwoyo," thank you. This simple utterance gives the narrator confidence that Lamunu's "dreams will come true. You will be a doctor someday" (59). The hope that Lamunu's once-destroyed future is now reinstated becomes assurance that both the family and Lamunu can eventually work through the trauma of the war.

For Lamunu and her family, their struggle toward a happy ending is impaired by the symptoms of trauma they experience, the primary one being a pervasive and almost insurmountable silence. This is far from unusual for trauma sufferers: the pain of trauma and its constant emotional recurrence can cause the sufferer to retreat into themselves to avoid the possibility of further pain. While the first line of "Butterfly Dreams" reveals that Lamunu will be returning home, and the family and reader both anticipate an emotional reconciliation, a chasm of unfamiliarity is immediately apparent and seemingly unnegotiable because of the silences propagated by both sides. Lamunu does not speak, and her family is afraid to. The narrator says, "We watched you silently. In return, you watched us in silence . . . We didn't want to treat you as if you were a stranger but in our hearts, we knew that you were new" (51). The trauma they have experienced has destroyed their former relationship, and the family misses the old Lamunu almost as much as they did when they thought she was dead. "We wanted to hear your husky voice. Hear you do the loud laugh you did before . . . But you were silent." They could tell that she was "happy to be back" and "happy to see us alive," but

when “[w]e greeted you . . . You didn’t answer our greetings” (51). When the family is confronted by Lamunu’s unwillingness or inability to speak, they respond with silence of their own. “We did not ask questions. We have heard the stories before from Anena, Aya, Bongomin, Nyeko, Ayat, Lalum, Auma, Ocheng, Otim, Olam, Uma, Ateng, Akwero, Laker, Odong, Lanyero, Ladu, Timi, Kati. We are sure your story is not any different” (51).

Lamunu’s family is hesitant, even unwilling, to ask her anything about her experience, assuming it must be similar to the traumatic stories of others from their village who have suffered from violence and abduction.

As much as the family wants to recreate their relationships with Lamunu, her silence makes her a stranger and discourages them from trying to speak to her. The night after Lamunu’s arrival, “Ma cried in her bed. She whispered your name time and again as if wishing you would at least say Ma. Although she was happy you were back, she never said it” (52). When Lamunu later wants to go to school, but the other children are afraid of her, her mother runs to help in an attempt to reestablish their mother-daughter relationship. “She wondered why you didn’t tell her anything. She wanted to help you. She wanted you to talk to her but she didn’t want to push you as well. She loved you though she could not say it.” Ma is not the only one who cannot renew her bond with Lamunu: the whole family is silenced by the knowledge that as a rebel, Lamunu has probably committed incomprehensible acts in order to stay alive. This knowledge is made more bitter by the fact that their father was killed by rebels while Lamunu was away. The narrator battles this paradox when she says, “We don’t know with which mouth to tell you that he was cut to pieces by those who you were fighting for.” The violence of the trauma experienced by both Lamunu and her family create a silence between them they do not know how to overcome.

Their silence isolates them from one another, preventing both the reestablishment of former ties and the creation of new ones. Lamwaka illustrates this isolation through her

narrator: despite “Butterfly Dreams” being a story about the trauma of a returning abductee, Lamunu does not narrate her own story because she cannot. Instead, the story is told through the private thoughts of a sister who desperately wants to speak with Lamunu but cannot. Instead, she describes things that happened during Lamunu’s absence, always qualified by the statement “Lamunu, we may never tell you this” (49). The narrator remains as isolated in her own pain as Lamunu appears to be, so isolated we never even learn her name.

Trauma has destroyed the safe communities that used to exist for Lamunu: her family, her school, and her village. Along with silence and isolation, a loss of community nearly always occurs when trauma is experienced, particularly a trauma such as war that affects a large number of people. This sort of trauma is “a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality . . . [It is] a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared” (Erikson 154). The silence and isolation is both a cause and a result of the destruction of those significant relationships that contribute to emotional safety and secure identity. When community is damaged, part of an individual’s identity dissolves along with the community. Thus individual and collective trauma are inextricably linked: if damage to one’s community damages oneself, then the community must be repaired or recreated in order to effectively heal the individual.

Lamunu and her family are obviously estranged—emotionally disconnected and isolated—in their silences, but the narrator of “Butterfly Dreams” also describes how the village community has been physically destroyed. The family homestead has been supplanted by an IDP camp filled with unrelated strangers. Furthermore, these thousands of refugee huts are not homes, they are “just huts to hide our nakedness” (53), “empty huts with empty people whose tipu (souls) have been buried or have taken a walk” (52-53). The traditional

movements that gave identity and purpose to individuals and set the boundaries of relationships with other members of the village have also been destroyed. Government soldiers prevent people from farming in open land or hunting food in the bush, from moving in regularized ways through their communities, and instead of working for their livelihoods in socially typical ways, the people now simply wait for handouts from foreign aid workers. The IDP camp—the assemblage of people that have replaced their family home—is populated by traumatized, “empty people” that together, instead of a community, make up merely a vast collection of unrelated huts, filled with unrelated people.

In “The Garden of Mushrooms,” trauma manifests itself with the same sorts of symptoms as “Butterfly Dreams:” silence, isolation, and the destruction of community. This time, however, it explores these symptoms in autobiographical terms. Lamwaka wrote “The Garden of Mushrooms” as part of FEMRITE’s *Farming Ashes* project, wherein women shared how their lives had been affected by the civil war. She begins with some of her earliest memories, from about age nine, when Yoweri Museveni came to power. Museveni’s revenge killings of Acholi frightened Lamwaka’s mother enough to send the young girl away from the geographical center of violence to live with her aunt. After the threat of violence recedes, Lamwaka returns home, but she soon begins seeing rebel soldiers in her village. Although at first they come peacefully, asking only for goats and chickens, the visits increase in violence, including one occasion when the family is held at gunpoint and interrogated for an hour. Soon, Lamwaka is hearing gunshots night and day, and her parents send her away again, this time to live with her older sister in Moroto. While there, she is enrolled in boarding school where she is miserable with loneliness and worry. Her worst fears are realized when she learns that her brother Nyeko has been abducted, and although he returns home after a few months, he dies later from a minor illness during which the family is too terrified of the soldiers to walk him the short distance to the hospital. Lamwaka also describes her life in

Kampala at Secondary School and University, where her Acholi ethnicity keeps her distant from other Ugandans. The short memoir ends with a declaration of her desire to be understood as an Acholi, and to find a man who understands her past and is willing to “sit with me under the remaining mango trees and dream of a Northern Uganda without war” (53).

“The Garden of Mushrooms” reveals a silence just as prevalent in Lamwaka’s life as it was in Lamunu’s. As a child Lamwaka retreats to silence when she returns home from her aunt Aya’s and discovers the village madman has been killed in her absence. She is “so sad about Lugul’s death that [she] refused to speak to people for a while” (48). The silence begins to permeate her family, particularly after her brother’s abduction. Commenting on this part of the story, Lamwaka later stated “we never really said it, [but] I think you don’t know how to deal with this person, [so] you don’t ask many questions . . . I feel like we should sit and talk and whatever. But nobody seems to talk, they just move on and life goes on” (Interview). After Lamwaka’s brother’s death, “The Garden of Mushrooms” describes their mother retreating into herself, as she ceases to communicate easily with the rest of the family. But the silence extends beyond herself and her family. Lamwaka begins to notice a collective silence in her village accompanying the escalation of rebel activity. After the rebel soldiers begin their constant demands for food and medicine, Lamwaka realizes, “Our neighbours were going through the same . . . But no one complained publicly. You could hear people talk but when you got near them you were met with silence. Perhaps nobody trusted anybody else anymore” (49). Just as the narrator of “Butterfly Dreams” waits sadly for the day when her family can candidly communicate with one another, Lamwaka grieves the loss of substantive, meaningful communication with her own family and village and laments, “Maybe one day we will find the tongue to share our stories; for now what we see is all we get” (“Garden” 51).



As Lamwaka grows up, silence is compounded and perpetuated by a sense of isolation, particularly in her splintered family. While their inability to communicate inflicts one sort of isolation, the loss of physical proximity from her parents and siblings inflicts another. From the time she is nine years old, she is repeatedly sent away by her parents to avoid the war. First she must live with her leperous aunt in a compound crowded with children—many of them cousins also fleeing from Museveni’s threat of violent reprisals against the Acholi. She is forced to sleep outside the house with her aunt because there is no room in the house. She is troubled by her distance from the other children, but soon “[o]ther older children came out saying it was hot inside. I remember that I was happy when they came out because I thought that if we all got killed it would be fair because all parents would be affected. It would have been unfair dying alone with aunt Aya” (47). Physical proximity to her parents is replaced by a physical proximity to other children who are also separated from their parents, an arrangement that, in her childlike understanding, seems appropriate and fair. If she is to be permanently separated from her family through death, at least others also separated from their families will be her companions in death. When she returns to her home village of Alokolum, this desire for physical proximity continues, even when it puts her life in danger. The night her family is held at gunpoint, she is able to sneak out of the house and into the garden, “but the thought of my whole family being murdered while I hid made me sneak back” (50). The fear of physical isolation from her family is so great she is willing to risk her life to be near them, even if it means her death.

As in “Butterfly Dreams,” Lamwaka’s own family homestead also became an official IDP camp. Lamwaka remembers in her childhood, “we had lots of . . . fruit trees around the home, avocado, oranges, bananas and whatever . . . And then war started and everything changed” (Interview). Within the story, as the war intensifies, villagers begin moving closer together for protection from incursions by the LRA and UPDF, and people begin settling on

her father's farm. Her father's "once beautiful house" is "now surrounded by thousands of huts" ("My Father's Home"), which from the air looks like "a garden of mushrooms" ("Garden" 52). A new community of previously unrelated people—"thousands of people in need of food, medical attention and clothing" (52)—has now transplanted itself within the physical borders of the emotional space once occupied by her family. The destruction of her physical home, and her inability to physically return to the familial spaces of the past, has haunted much of Lamwaka's other writing as well, including the poem "My Father's Home" and her short story "Bonding Ceremony."

Lamwaka also uses "The Garden of Mushrooms" to explore the effects of trauma on her relationship with her ethnic community. Kai Erikson has asserted that trauma has "both centripetal and centrifugal tendencies. It draws one away from the center of group space while at the same time drawing one back" (qtd. in Eyerman 43). In the same way that trauma isolates an individual from her community, it simultaneously creates a greater emotional need for identification with that community. For Lamwaka, because the war with the LRA was partially exacerbated by ethnic tensions between the Acholi and Museveni's southern Ugandan origins, being Acholi in Uganda during the war meant being "both victims *and* aggressors" (de Swaan 128). This creates anxiety for Lamwaka about her identity. She is repelled by the "hurtful" non-Acholi, who ask questions she can't answer, such as "How has the war affected you?" (52). She refuses to promote relationships with people outside her ethnic community for fear of "the remarks." She imagines she knows what is in their minds, and preempts any possibility of normal relationships with them by "introducing [her]self as Kony's sister" (52). Paradoxically, as Erikson has described, this isolation from a greater Ugandan community intensifies her longing for relationships with other Acholi: "I wanted a man who knew my story and whose story I knew" (53) because to be with other Acholi is emotionally safe and familiar. Furthermore, while the war disrupts her ability to interact

normally with non-Acholi, she is nevertheless humiliated by the actions of some Acholi. Torn between the “centripetal and centrifugal tendencies” of trauma, Lamwaka is embarrassed to be “someone whose relatives kill each other, chop each others [*sic*] lips and noses off and cook each other in pots” (52), while simultaneously unable to create friendships with those who are not Acholi.

Silence, isolation, and the inability to maintain consistent and safe communities produces in “The Garden of Mushrooms” a pervasive sense of powerlessness, another common manifestation of trauma. After she returns from staying with Aunt Aya, Lamwaka describes the train that runs through her village every morning, and how she runs to meet it and wave to the passengers. While on the one hand the train represents the return of normalcy after violence, it also becomes symbolic of her powerlessness:

There was a rumor that if one placed a needle in the train track, the train would slide off. And we all believed it. But I could never understand how such a powerful machine could be weakened by such a small thing. Sometimes I wished I could put the needle on the railway line, not because I wanted to cause an accident but because I wanted to prove the theory. I never got the courage anyway. (“Garden” 48-49)

The powerful machinations of war and violence that run through Lamwaka’s life feel to her unstoppable. Not only is their power is so much greater than hers, but they have worn away her “courage” to fight against these machinations, leaving her unable or unwilling to face them.

The emotional pain of the many manifestations of trauma in these two texts, however, is tempered by the many layers of narrative recuperation attempted by numerous narrators: Lamunu’s sister, Lamunu, their family, and Beatrice Lamwaka herself. Lamunu’s sister attempts to narrate her own trauma through a barrage of memories—of Lamunu’s abduction,

of the burial ceremony the family held when they were sure she wasn't coming back, of her father's death, of the destruction of their homestead. The narrator seems to recognize the simultaneous importance and difficulty of witnessing the truth—of narrativizing trauma—when she declares, “Each day we pray we get the strength to tell you” (57). The difficulty in narrating her own trauma is compounded by Lamunu's seeming inability to verbalize her own. However, the narrator resists the isolating silence of trauma as she continues to address her sister despite their emotional estrangement. Although she points to some future reconciliation when she says, “One day when the war ends, you will tell us your story. And we will tell you our stories” (57), she seems driven to tell the stories now, regardless of Lamunu's detachment. The stories end only when Lamunu breaks her silence and begins to speak. The family discovers that Lamunu has gone to speak to the headmaster about attending school, and despite the family's disappointment that Lamunu's first words were not to them, they are nonetheless “happy that you said something” (57). From this point the narrator ceases to review her memories and only narrates the present action, as if Lamunu's willingness to reengage with a community frees her sister-narrator from her own isolation within her traumatic memories. Now that Lamunu has begun speaking, the sister's narration of trauma can end.

Throughout most of “Butterfly Dreams,” Lamunu's silence is itself a sort of narration, the state of her physical body and her abnormal behavior expressing what her voice cannot. The narrator describes Lamunu's war-ravaged body: “You were skinny as a cassava stem. Bullet scars on your left arm and right leg. Your feet were cracked and swollen as if you had walked the entire planet. Long scars mapped your once beautiful face” (50). The physical defects created by Lamunu's trauma tell stories that Lamunu is unable to verbalize, and she uses them to communicate with her family. “You caressed your scars as if to tell us what you went through” (50-51), and her family members respect this communication by remaining

silent themselves: “We did not ask questions” (51). Lamunu’s strange behavior is also a kind of narration. She cries out in her sleep, describing the horrific acts she was forced to commit, and as her family squeezes her hand in comfort, blood flows as if to “drain all your pain away” (54). When the rest of the family retreats indoors to escape a thunderstorm, Lamunu remains in the rain as if she “were letting out something” (54). As in her dreams, her body again attempts to bleed away her trauma as the rainstorm reveals Lamunu’s menses, and the family watches “the rain wash the blood away” (55). Although Lamunu is unable to communicate verbally, her actions become another form of narration, making her trauma known to her family in a way that allows for a small measure of understanding.

Lamunu’s nonverbal state witnesses her trauma in a paradoxical way, reminiscent of the *Muselmann* of the Nazi concentration camps described by Giorgio Agamben. *Muselmann* was the term for a nearly dead survivor who had lost all emotional capacity for living, described as “a staggering corpse, a bundle of physical functions in its last convulsions” (41). Agamben characterizes the catatonic silence of the *Muselmann* as the ultimate witness of trauma, because those who have experienced the worst trauma are those who are traumatized past the ability to witness. Lamunu remains in this state, trapped and isolated by the paradox of her “absolutely unforgettable” trauma that is “to the same degree unimaginable, that is, irreducible to the real elements that constitute it” (Agamben 12). This contradiction keeps her silent until she is one day able to return to a physical community from her past—her school, at which point the reintegration of her past activities with her present self allows her to escape the captive state of the *Muselmann* and begin to speak to her family.

“Butterfly Dreams” illustrates another form of non-verbal narration as the family utilizes traditional religious rites as a ritualized form of narrating trauma. One ritual occurred before Lamunu returned home, when the family convinced Ma that, after long years with no news of her whereabouts, they should bury Lamunu’s *tipi* (spirit) in place of her body so it

could rest. Traditional Acholi religion holds that spirits not laid to rest properly will roam the land and plague the living. Despite Ma's refusal to believe Lamunu is dead, she concedes to the ceremony, wearing *opobo* leaves for the requisite three days. Like Lamunu's silence, this ritual also represents an alternative form of testimony, a symbolic act of reconciling a past traumatic loss with the present. But after Lamunu's return, this narrative is disrupted, causing more consternation than peace for the family. Unsure of the effects of this ritual, the family wonders if they have caused Lamunu's silence: "We wanted to know whether your *tipu* had been buried with your voice. We had never been taught how to unbury a *tipu*. We only hoped that your real *tipu* was not six feet under" (52). Now that Lamunu has returned but is not herself, the family worries that the ceremony performed to lay her to rest will prevent her from becoming whole again.

Upon Lamunu's return, the family requests that she perform a ritual herself, this one as a way of reconciling her to her community. The purpose of the *nyono tonggweno* ceremony is to cleanse her of any evil spirits she may have collected during her time away that could "bring misfortune to the whole community" (Harlacher 175).<sup>8</sup> An egg is balanced on a forked twig from the *opobo* tree, and the end of the *opobo* twig rests on a *layibi*, a long stick used to open a granary. The person returning home is required to jump over the *layibi* and step on the egg, breaking it open on the ground and symbolically cleansing her from any evil deeds committed while away. Lamunu performed the ceremony with no objection, "like you knew you would never be clean until you were cleansed" ("Dreams" 51). Despite her

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<sup>8</sup> Although *nyono tonggweno* is a commonplace Acholi tradition used for those returning home after long periods of time away, this ceremony has seen widespread use since the rebel war in the North as a way of welcoming, cleansing, and healing those attempting to return home from the war. In fact, "almost all the LRA returnees (their numbers are estimated at over 12,000) have undergone this ceremony" (Latigo 106). This ceremony is simple, straightforward, and costs nearly nothing to prepare, perhaps explaining its widespread use in the impoverished North.

guiltless abduction, Lamunu and her family believe the spirits and deeds that had surrounded her in the bush must be eradicated so they will not adversely affect the community.

For Lamunu and her family, traditional rituals cannot elicit healing on their own because the silences surrounding their trauma are too strong. Lamunu's decision to break the silence brings her family hope: "We're happy to hear you say something. We hope that you will be able to say a lot more" (58). Although Petar Ramadanovic claims that postcolonial and trauma novels never end "on a triumphant note" (187), Lamwaka's fiction, along with that of other FEMRITE authors, is often a happy exception. The narrator is confident that Lamunu's "dreams will come true" and she will "be a doctor some day" (59). Despite the silence, isolation, and helplessness induced by violence of the war, verbal and nonverbal attempts to narrativize the trauma allow individuals varied approaches for working through their trauma in order to arrive at a satisfying degree of healing.

But if narration helps Lamwaka's fictional characters to heal from trauma, what effect has Lamwaka's own attempts at narrative recuperation had on her personal trauma? Her writing, from the beginning served as a kind of therapy for managing the strain of the war. "[I]t was my way of dealing with things, you know, like the war was going on . . . and then you're looking at your family, and you really don't know how . . . Some things you can't even ask, or question. So writing was sort of my way of dealing with things." Writing "Butterfly Dreams" and "The Garden of Mushrooms" allowed Lamwaka a process for recontextualizing her traumatic experiences in a form she could emotionally endure. "I also noticed that whenever I would go home, north, I would come back really depressed about the state of things, and then I'd write about them" (Interview). "Butterfly Dreams" was a conscious effort to narrate the trauma of her own brother's abduction by creating a story about another abduction. Writing became Lamwaka's way of countering the powerlessness of

trauma, creating stories such as “Butterfly Dreams” where characters could work through their trauma by rejecting silence and isolation in favor of (re)connecting with communities.

Lamwaka’s preoccupation with silence comes from the significant place silence has held in her own life and relationships. Her brother’s abduction and return was fraught with silences, an ongoing disposition in her family that stunts her ability to make sense of traumatic events. She related, “In a way, you don’t ask many questions . . . I feel like we should sit and talk and whatever. But nobody seems to sit and talk, they just move on and life goes on” (Interview). She calls this tendency to silence “a coping mechanism”<sup>9</sup> in the face of ongoing trauma, a way to continue functioning despite persistent violence:

You know, as long as you—there were so many unpredictable things happening, and so—as long as you were able to see somebody . . . you didn’t have to talk about “Oh, where were you? Did you see that gun?” . . . I don’t know, maybe we sort of tried to delete the things from our lives, so maybe trying to delete them in our memories, so that we think that not talking about them will bring back. . . Even me, I know when I was younger, so many things that happened with my family, but we never talked about them. I would never find my sister and say “Do you remember when the soldier pointed the gun at your head?” I’d never do that. No one brings them up. (Interview)

While these silences may have consumed Lamwaka’s life, her involvement in FEMRITE offers a way to fight against the isolation that silence perpetuates. From the beginning of her involvement in FEMRITE, the organization has constituted an emotionally safe place in which Lamwaka could explore her personal trauma through writing. Many of her stories and essays continue to deal with narrative, silence, and community, and while she has not yet dispelled all the traumatic ghosts that have troubled her past, it is apparent that her

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<sup>9</sup> Stef Craps, in his analysis of Aminatta Forna’s *The Memory of Love* in “Beyond Eurocentrism,” also references silence as a coping mechanism common to African societies.



involvement in FEMRITE has given her greater opportunities to work through her trauma through narrative.

#### FEMRITE as a Socio-Literary Force

Beatrice Lamwaka is just one of many authors at FEMRITE, and while she has perhaps experienced greater trauma than some of her fellow writers, her work and her life are nonetheless representative of an approach to trauma that the FEMRITE organization embodies. Doreen Strauhs, a researcher of FEMRITE has asserted, “publications by writers associated with FEMRITE . . . are highly reflective of their immediate Ugandan . . . environments” (9). If this is the case, then FEMRITE literature, along with historical, ethnographical, and sociological records paints a grim picture of extensive systemic trauma in the lives of Ugandan women. Yet FEMRITE’s activities and literature promote a profound optimism in the possibilities of healing through narrative recuperation. FEMRITE’s social programs offer women the opportunity to tell their stories of trauma not just to increase social awareness of injustice and violence, but also because “Story telling and experience sharing is one of the ways of healing a hurting heart both for the story teller and the listener/reader” (Twongyeirwe viii). This resolute commitment to healing is perhaps one of the reasons for FEMRITE’s prolonged success: by creating a sisterhood of emotional and writerly support among its members, and in expanding that sisterhood to Ugandan women outside the physical proximity of FEMRITE’s offices, it has become an indispensable part of these women’s lives.

The narratives and activities of FEMRITE are bound to have a lasting effect on the literary-historical landscape of Uganda. The stories they tell mirror the act of narration being performed by the authors themselves, and, because the narratives these authors create through their subjects persist beyond the physical space in which they were created, their trauma narratives become part of a wider cultural discourse. Author Monica de Nyeko has expressed the need for Ugandan writers to engage the traumatic events of their history in order that the

origins of trauma may be eradicated. Speaking specifically about the civil war, she states, “[W]e need essays and more stories coming out of that period of our history. We should never forget and writing about things like this helps us collectively to never forget” (Email). Writing about “things like this” also helps to create communities that will engender healing, as well as increase understanding of trauma that has already occurred. The very creation of FEMRITE narratives illustrates the persistent need trauma sufferers feel to develop community, whether in proximal space, in the reinstatement of lifestyle or practices that existed prior to the trauma, in the creation of new ties to new groups, or in trusting communication of intimate emotions.

FEMRITE’s literary and social agenda are one and the same: by creating a community of women writers, FEMRITE has dramatically expanded the chorus of literary voices to include authentic stories of women’s trauma that reflect and interrogate modern Ugandan society. Thus, the literature and activities of FEMRITE have the potential to make a profound impact on the collective trauma of the Ugandan people. Further research on the FEMRITE organization and its individual authors can only improve our understanding of Ugandan society and the role of literature as a tool for socio-political change.

## Appendix A

## List of FEMRITE Publications

<u>Date</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Author/Editor</u>	<u>Genre</u>
1998	<i>The Invisible Weevil</i>	Mary Karooro Okurut	Fiction
1998	<i>Memoirs of a Mother</i>	Ayeta Anne Wangusa	Fiction
1998	<i>A Woman's Voice</i>	Ed. Mary Karooro Okurut	Short Story Collection
1998	<i>The African Saga</i>	Susan N. Kiguli	Poetry
1999	<i>Cassandra</i>	Violet Barungi	Fiction
1999	<i>Secrets No More</i>	Goretti Kyomuhendo	Fiction
1999	<i>Silent Patience</i>	Jane Kaberuka	Fiction
1999	<i>A Season of Mirth</i>	Regina Amollo	Fiction
1999	<i>No Hearts at Home</i>	Christine Oryema-Lalobo	Poetry
2000	<i>Ugandan Creative Writers Directory</i>	Ed. Bernard Tabaire	Encyclopedic Directory
2001	<i>Words from a Granary</i>	Ed. Violet Barungi	Short Story Collection
2003	<i>Men Love Chocolates But They Don't Say</i>	Mildred Kiconco Barya	Poetry
2003	<i>Tears of Hope: A Collection of Short Stories by Ugandan Rural Women</i>	Ed. Ayeta Anne Wangusa	Interview Collection
2004	<i>Shockwaves Across the Ocean</i>	Bananuka Jocelyn Ekochu	Fiction

<u>Date (cont.)</u>	<u>Title (cont.)</u>	<u>Author/Editor (cont.)</u>	<u>Genre (cont.)</u>
2006	<i>Gifts of Harvest</i>	Ed. Violet Barungi	Short Story/Poetry Collection
2007	<i>I Dare to Say</i>	Ed. Susan Kiguli, Violet Barungi	Interview Collection
2007	<i>Today You Will Understand: Women of Northern Uganda speak out</i>	Ed. Jackie Christie	Interview Collection
2009	<i>Beyond the Dance</i>	Ed. Violet Barungi, Hilda Twongyeirwe	Interviews Collection
2009	<i>Farming Ashes</i>	Ed. Violet Barungi, Hilda Twongyeirwe	Interview Collection
2009	<i>Pumpkin Seeds And Other Gifts: Stories from the FEMRITE Regional Writers Residency, 2008</i>	Ed. Helen Moffett, Violet Barungi	Short Story/Poetry Collection
2009	<i>Talking Tales</i>	Ed. Violet Barungi	Poetry
2010	<i>The Butterfly Dance</i>	Ed. Okaka Dokatum, Rose Rwakasisi	Children's Stories/Poetry
2011	<i>Never Too Late</i>	Ed. Hilda Twongyeirwe, Aaron Mushengyezi	Short Story/Poetry Collection

## Appendix B

## List of Interviewees

<u>Date</u>	<u>Interviewee</u>
19-May-2014	Hilda Twongyeirwe
19-May-2014	Monica Arac de Nyeko
19-May-2014	Oyugi, Jackson Dré
20-May-2014	Melissa Kyeyni
20-May-2014	Beverley Nambozo
20-May-2014	Beatrice Lamwaka
20-May-2014	Philo Nabweru Rwabakuku
21-May-2014	Regina Amollo
21-May-2014	Barbara Oketta
22-May-2014	Lillian Aujo
22-May-2014	Constance Obonyo
23-May-2014	Juliet Kushaba
23-May-2014	Betty Kituyi
23-May-2014	Apophia Agiresaasi
23-May-2014	Margaret Ntakalimaze
23-May-2014	Doreen Baingana
24-May-2014	Elizabeth Namakula
26-May-2014	Peter Kagayi
26-May-2014	Asiimwe, Tuwangye, Bonnetvantage
26 May 2014	Frances Naiga

<u>Date (cont.)</u>	<u>Interviewee (cont.)</u>
27-May-2014	Violet Barungi
29-May-2014	Susan Kiguli
30-May-2014	Jocelyn Ekochu

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