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

Candice Taylor Stratford

Abstract

In 1996, a group of notable Ugandan women writers created FEMRITE, the Ugandan Women Writers Association. Over the last twenty years, it has become an essential element of Ugandan literary society, the largest and most successful women’s writing group in East Africa, and one of the most influential literary communities on the African continent. Because of cultural and political violence in the region, a large proportion of FEMRITE’s writings reflect various forms of trauma. This calls for engagement with trauma theories. I 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 analyze two texts by FEMRITE author Beatrice Lamwaka to demonstrate the manifestations of trauma in her stories and the ways they are narrated, as well as the way Lamwaka uses narrative and community to work through her own personal trauma. Through an analysis of its organizations and publications, I show that FEMRITE offers a uniquely optimistic and socially persuasive approach to trauma and healing.

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 two decades, 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 and has published more than two dozen novels, short story anthologies, and volumes of poetry. It has also promoted 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 anthologies are published. It has also periodically organized reading tents to promote literacy among school children, visual art and poetry collaborations, and a writer's caravan that travels around the country attending public readings in writers' home villages.¹ 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."² In this spirit of development and progress, writers have come to FEMRITE often with the aim not only of honing their craft but also of exposing injustices suffered by Ugandan women—with hopes of changing Ugandan society. Founding member Margaret Ntakalimaze stated: "That's why we are writing books, for human rights [activists] to act upon such kinds of issues."³ 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 sociopolitical change.

This relationship between community, writing, and change is particularly evident when we engage FEMRITE within the field of trauma studies. Scholars have traditionally defined trauma as what happens to a person's psyche when presented with the physical or emotional violence of what Dominick LaCapra calls a *limit event*, which is "an event that goes beyond the capacity of the imagination to conceive or anticipate it."⁴ Because the victim cannot understand her traumatic experience through constructs offered by society, the trauma intrudes on her everyday life and isolates her from her social communities. Traumatic events alter the sufferer's apperception of social rules and contexts, which in turn alters her ability to make meaning from her experience and thereby affects how and what she is able to narrate about the event. 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 in the lives of Ugandan women because of war, poverty, patriarchy, and AIDS. The same publications also reveal the community disruption that such trauma engenders.

Trauma is not an uncommon theme in African writing generally,⁵ but what makes FEMRITE unique is its optimism about 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 their existing communities or absorbed into new ones. Communities—new or old—are significant in FEMRITE's understanding of the process of healing from trauma, since they enable 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 writing or through oral interviews, and on a literary level, by publishing the narrations of women and their traumas. Thus, studying FEMRITE as a community of writers responding to trauma becomes an exercise in peeling back layers: layers of narrative, including the personal, fictional, and cultural, as well as layers of community, which are 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 to people as they work through trauma.

In order to understand the importance of narrative and of community in the healing of trauma, I begin with an overview of the foundational trauma theories that inform my analysis and then incorporate my analysis of how the FEMRITE organization enacts healing. Although a survey of the entire FEMRITE corpus and the lives of its writers is beyond the scope of this article, I illustrate through representative examples the ways in which FEMRITE offers possibilities for women to heal from trauma through narrating their experiences, as well as the ways in which it offers people opportunities to join, create, or re-engage with various communities through its social-literary programs. Then,

I turn to one of its authors, Beatrice Lamwaka, and discuss her work as both a literary and a 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 many of FEMRITE's published works, which address subjects such as 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 analyze her short story "Butterfly Dreams" and her personal short-story 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 uses narrative and community to work 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,⁶ Kali Tal,⁷ Dominick LaCapra, and others in the late twentieth century have broadened the application of trauma as a theory to a variety of disciplines. In literary theory, trauma has been primarily characterized by postmodern aesthetics, in which 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."⁸ 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, which prevents healing for the sufferer.

After 2007, however, postcolonial scholars have scrutinized the postmodern and Eurocentric bias of trauma studies and have categorized 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."⁹ This Western intellectual

foundation 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.”¹⁰ Postcolonial scholars have instead begun examining non-Western texts for the “cultural and historical specificity” with which they represent trauma and have argued that, in fact, non-Western literatures represent trauma in significantly different ways.¹¹ 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 use postmodern formal aesthetics to represent trauma, scholars now suggest that these elements represent the permeability of contemporary cultural and intellectual boundaries more than a universal standard.

Recent approaches in 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 notes that a second limitation is a problematic emphasis on “events and not systems” within trauma theory, as well as trauma theory’s “assumption of privileged, secure subject positions.”¹² In fact, FEMRITE literature emphasizes the converse and often presents straightforward discourse that highlights the experiences of marginalized subjects, particularly women, who are stuck in sociopolitical circumstances that create systems of repetitive trauma. Finally, Rothberg contends that the field of trauma studies has traditionally been preoccupied with individual subjects capable of working through their traumas or at least those capable of considering how they are acting out trauma. 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.¹³ Rather, “confronting and working through the past is not necessarily first in the minds of trauma survivors preoccupied with the importance of feeding families, finding a home, and returning to work.”¹⁴ As one of its primary goals, FEMRITE often explores, through its literature and programs, the systemic trauma of women who live at subsistence

levels and who have no recourse to the luxury of working through the trauma-inducing systems in which they are trapped. The concept of systemic trauma is particularly useful for understanding FEMRITE literature, because recognition of the existence of trauma systems demands equal recognition of trauma's structural, political, or social sources.

By emphasizing 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 FEMRITE and its publications. From its inception, FEMRITE has 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 have sought to fight injustice, sexism, and violence in all 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."¹⁵ Dissecting this mission statement reveals the four foundational elements of the FEMRITE organization: women, writing, community, and social development. The first element 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. However, understanding the other three elements—writing, community, and social development—is 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*. Their work emphasizes the role of testimony in externalizing and recontextualizing trauma, which counters 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.”¹⁶ James Berger has argued that narrative allows the mind to begin to process what before had 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.”¹⁷ Through narrativization, the sufferer circumvents the disruptive nature of trauma; just as traumatic experiences break the social codes on which one relies for meaning, testimony about the trauma allows the sufferer to formulate a new world with new social codes and to account 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 have 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.”¹⁸ These various terms for writing-to-heal—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, and 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 with FEMRITE author Barbara Oketta,¹⁹ 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 think trying to deal with that, I wrote that story.”²⁰ For Oketta, writing became a way of working through her anger and sadness about 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.”²¹ This signals that, like Oketta, writing became a way for de Nyeko to refigure a world disrupted by loss and pain and to reorganize previously incomprehensible experiences into comprehensible ones.

Aside from 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 their stories in volumes of essays. These have included *Tears of Hope*, which covers stories of women who “have had their human rights violated simply because of their gender;”²² *I Dare to Say*, which is about women living with HIV/AIDS;²³ and “*Today You Will Understand*”: *Women of Northern Uganda Speak Out*, which is a joint publication with IRIN Radio Project that includes interviews with women living in IDP camps in Northern Uganda, whose interviews were also broadcast on local radio stations.²⁴ Other such publications include *Beyond the Dance*, which relates stories of women in the Kapchorwa region of Uganda who were subject to female genital mutilation²⁵ and *Farming Ashes*, which shares essays by and about women who have suffered from the civil war in Northern Uganda.²⁶

These interview projects were formulated as programs to collect and share stories of trauma. Unfortunately, for my purpose in this article, the publications that resulted from the projects rarely reflect on the impact that sharing these stories may have had on the women who narrated them. However, according to my interviews with FEMRITE authors, these traumatic stories have had profound effects on the authors to whom they were narrated. One of those authors, Jocelyn Ekochu, remembers two stories in particular. The first was part of the *Tears of Hope* project, during which she interviewed a mother whose daughter had been 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 the interview as “so emotional; it was so emotional” that “I think I was running the risk of being absorbed into it.”²⁷ The other story Ekochu remembers was about a young woman who was forced

into circumcision and who, as an adult, is now paralyzed because of complications from the procedure. Reflecting on these experiences, Ekochu echoed what she called the sentiments of criminal investigators and said, “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.”²⁸ Many other FEMRITE authors I interviewed expressed similar emotions related to the process of interviewing. Their experiences of meeting and witnessing the traumatic stories of women from around Uganda have become a permanent part of their own identities and have impacted 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.²⁹ Narrative recuperation breaks the bonds of isolation that inevitably result from trauma; witnessing can hardly occur without a listener. The members of this shared experience become a type of community, which may grant the sufferer at least “some social acknowledgment if not acceptance.”³⁰ Communities can comprise a wide variety of individuals and can be disparate sizes. They also fulfill the basic emotional human need for attachment that Herman contends must be met in order for healing to occur. As I will show in my analysis of Lamwaka’s writing, a person who is traumatized can attempt either to recreate old communities that existed before the trauma occurred or to create new ones. These communities include intimate partnerships, family relationships, neighborhood associations, ethnic societies, and national identities. Connecting and reconnecting with these communities may happen in a variety of ways, including through the intimacy of physical space, in the felt obligation of proximal relations, or even through Benedict Anderson’s conception of imagined communities³¹—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."³² The inspiration gleaned from this sort of writers' community was reiterated again and again in the interviews I conducted. When I asked Beatrice Lamwaka whether she thought she would have been a writer without FEMRITE, she 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."³³ 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 allow 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.³⁴

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."³⁵ Current member Betty Kituyi also described the emotional void that FEMRITE has filled for her, and she said, "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."³⁶

The FEMRITE community has become a place where women feel safe enough 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 traumas, 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 could not speak Acholi, so she jumped at the opportunity to travel north to interview Acholi women displaced by the civil war. Her interviews gave her insight into the traumas experienced by the Acholi, and she said, “When you finally meet someone who went through it, it becomes real to you. It stops being a news article.”³⁷ 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.”³⁸

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 they are often subtly displayed within a more traditionally female domain. African literature in the colonial and postcolonial period has often been political in nature. Simon Gikandi notes 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.”³⁹ FEMRITE has continued this tradition of literary social responsibility and has promoted 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.”⁴⁰ FEMRITE fiction, then, often exhibits a moralistic or didactic flavor;⁴¹ 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 of 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*—that “all policy makers, legislators and persons in authority at all levels . . . take deliberate action to reverse the situation.”⁴²

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 healing trauma.

The Power of Narrative and Community

I turn now to FEMRITE's publications to show how narrative recuperation and the (re)creation of various communities combat the silence and isolation trauma engenders and create opportunities for healing. Beatrice Lamwaka's "Butterfly Dreams" and "The Garden of Mushrooms" are set during one of Uganda's military conflicts, a devastating guerilla insurgency by Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) against President Museveni's Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF), which occurred 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 the Acholi community has been fractured. The LRA's guerrilla tactics have been brutal, and the UPDF has answered in kind; human rights violations and atrocities have been committed on both sides, including rape, abduction, torture, mutilation, and murder. One of the most appalling aspects of the conflict has been the LRA's abduction and forced conscription of civilians, including thousands of children. After their conscription, these children were 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,⁴³ and 90 percent of Acholi removed from their homes to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps,⁴⁴ the ethnic Acholi society has experienced an unspeakable collective trauma that continues to take its toll in the present.⁴⁵

Lamwaka's "Butterfly Dreams" illustrates the lasting devastation of this war on individuals, families, villages, and the Acholi community 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 with a damaged mind. Almost mute, Lamunu is unable to speak of her experiences, her

feelings, or even 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 her family, 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 and says "apwoyo," thank you. This simple utterance gives the narrator confidence that Lamunu's "dreams will come true. You will be a doctor someday."⁴⁶ The hope that Lamunu's once-destroyed future is now reinstated becomes assurance that both the family and Lamunu will eventually work through the trauma of the war.

For Lamunu and her family, their struggle to heal is impaired by a pervasive and almost insurmountable silence. 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 both apparent and insurmountable because of the silences propagated by both sides. Lamunu does not speak, and her family is afraid to speak. The narrator says, "We watched you silently. In return, you watched us in silence . . ."⁴⁷ and "We wanted to hear your husky voice. Hear you do the loud laugh you did before. . . . But you were silent." 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. . . . We are sure your story is not any different."⁴⁸ Lamunu's family is hesitant, even unwilling, to ask her anything about her experiences, which they assume must be similar to the traumatic stories of others from their village who have suffered from violence and abduction.

As much as the family members want to recreate their relationships with Lamunu, her silence makes her a stranger and discourages them from trying to speak with her. The night after Lamunu's arrival, her sister notes that "Ma cried in her bed. She whispered your name time and again as if wishing you would at least say Ma,"⁴⁹ and "[Ma] 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."⁵⁰ But her mother 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 likely committed incomprehensible acts in order to stay alive. This knowledge is made more bitter by the fact that Lamunu's father was killed by rebels while she 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."⁵¹ The violence of the trauma experienced by both Lamunu and her family creates a silence between them that they do not know how to overcome.

Their silence isolates them from one another, which prevents both the reestablishment of former ties and the creation of new ones. Lamwaka illustrates this isolation through her narrator: although "Butterfly Dreams" is 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 Lamunu's sister, who desperately wants to speak with her but cannot. She describes things that happened during Lamunu's absence and always qualifies them with the statement, "Lamunu, we may never tell you this."⁵² The narrator remains as isolated in her own pain as Lamunu appears to be; she is so isolated, in fact, that we never even learn her name.

The widespread trauma of war has destroyed the safe communities that used to exist for Lamunu: her family, her school, and her village. 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."⁵³ Silence and isolation are both causes and results of the destruction of significant relationships that contribute to emotional safety and to secure identity. When a community is damaged, part of an individual's identity dissolves along with it. 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 “empty huts with empty people whose tipu (souls) have been buried or have taken a walk.”⁵⁴ The traditional movements that gave identity and purpose to individuals and that set the boundaries of relationships with other members of the village have also been destroyed. Government soldiers prevent people from farming in open land, hunting food in the bush, and moving in regularized ways through their communities. Instead of working for their livelihoods in socially typical ways, people now simply wait for handouts from foreign aid workers. The IDP camp—the assemblage of people who have replaced their home community—is populated by traumatized, “empty people” who, instead of a community, make up merely a vast collection of unrelated huts filled with unrelated people.

In “The Garden of Mushrooms,” trauma manifests with the same sorts of symptoms as in “Butterfly Dreams”: silence, isolation, and the destruction of community. This time, however, Lamwaka explores these symptoms in autobiographical terms. She wrote “The Garden of Mushrooms” as part of FEMRITE’s *Farming Ashes* project, in which women shared how their lives had been affected by the civil war. She begins the story with some of her earliest memories, from around age nine, about the period during which Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni’s soldiers began exacting revenge killings on Acholi, and rebel soldiers began terrorizing her village. For protection, her mother sent her away to live first with an aunt and then with her older sister in Moroto. Her brother Nyeko was abducted, and although he returned home after a few months, he later died from a minor illness; the family was 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 at university, where her Acholi ethnicity kept her distant from other Ugandans. This short story 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 [her] under the remaining mango trees and dream of a Northern Uganda without war.”⁵⁵

“The Garden of Mushrooms” reveals a silence just as prevalent in Lamwaka’s life as it was in the life of her fictional character Lamunu—a silence that permeates her family, particularly after her brother’s abduction. 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."⁵⁶ But the silence she invokes in the story extends beyond herself and her family. After the rebel soldiers begin their constant demands for food and medicine, Lamwaka realizes, "Our neighbors 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."⁵⁷ 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."⁵⁸

In the story, as Lamwaka grows up, silence and isolation are compounded by her physical distance from her parents and siblings. From age nine, she is repeatedly sent away by her parents to avoid the war. First, she must live with her leprous aunt in a compound crowded with children—but she is forced to sleep outside the house with her aunt because there is no room near the other children. She is troubled by this 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."⁵⁹ 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 are also separated from their families and 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."⁶⁰ The fear of physical isolation from her family is so great that 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 becomes an official IDP camp. 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,”⁶¹ which from the air look like “a garden of mushrooms.”⁶² A new community of previously unrelated people — “thousands of people in need of food, medical attention, and clothing” — 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 also haunted much of Lamwaka’s other writing, 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.”⁶³ 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, the war with the LRA was partially exacerbated by ethnic tensions between the Acholi and Museveni, because of his Southern Ugandan origins. Thus, being Acholi in Uganda during the war meant being “both victims *and* aggressors.”⁶⁴ For Lamwaka, this creates anxiety about her identity. She is repelled by the “hurtful” non-Acholi, who ask questions she cannot answer, such as “How has the war affected you?”⁶⁵ She intentionally pushes people away by “introducing [her]self as Kony’s sister.”⁶⁶ 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.”⁶⁷ For Lamwaka, being with other Acholi is emotionally safe and familiar. Yet she is also 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.”⁶⁸

The emotional pain of the many manifestations of trauma in these two texts, however, is tempered by the layers of narrative

recuperation attempted by many of the narrators: Lamunu's sister, Lamunu, Lamunu's 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 Lamunu was not returning, of her father's death, of the destruction of their homestead. She seems to recognize the simultaneous importance and difficulty of witnessing, of narrativizing trauma, and she says to Lamunu, "Each day we pray we get the strength to tell you."⁶⁹ The difficulty Lamunu's sister experiences with narrating her 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,"⁷⁰ she seems driven to tell the stories immediately, 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."⁷¹ 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 to speak, her 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 express 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."⁷² 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. As her sister notes, "You caressed your scars as if to tell us what you went through."⁷³ Lamunu's strange behavior is also a kind of narration. When the rest of the family retreats indoors to escape a thunderstorm, Lamunu remains in the rain as if she "were

letting out something.”⁷⁴ Her body attempts to bleed away her trauma as the rainstorm reveals Lamunu’s menses, and the family watches “the rain wash the blood away.”⁷⁵ Although Lamunu is unable to communicate verbally, her actions become another layer of narration and make her trauma known to her family in a way that allows for a small measure of understanding.

“Butterfly Dreams” illustrates another form of non-verbal narration: the family utilizes traditional religious rites to narrate trauma. One ritual occurred before Lamunu returned home; 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 and wears *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 and causes 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.”⁷⁶ Now that Lamunu has returned but is not herself, the family worries that the ceremony they performed to lay her to rest will prevent her from becoming whole again.

For Lamunu and her family, the silences surrounding their traumas are too strong to be healed by traditional rituals alone. 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.”⁷⁷ Although literary scholar Petar Ramadanovic claims that postcolonial and trauma novels never end “on a triumphant note,”⁷⁸ 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 that she will “be a doctor some day.”⁷⁹ Despite the silence, isolation, and helplessness induced by the war’s violence, verbal and nonverbal attempts to narrativize the trauma in Lamwaka’s stories allow

individuals varied approaches for working through their traumas in order to arrive at a satisfying degree of healing.

But if narration helps Lamwaka's fictional characters heal from trauma, what effects have Lamwaka's own attempts at narrative recuperation had on her personal trauma? Her writing, from the beginning, has served as a kind of therapy for managing the strain of the war. She notes, "[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."⁸⁰ Writing "Butterfly Dreams" and "The Garden of Mushrooms" provided Lamwaka with a process to recontextualize her traumatic experiences in a form she could emotionally endure. She explains, "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."⁸¹ "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—through creating stories, such as "Butterfly Dreams," where characters could work through their traumas 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, and silence represents an ongoing disposition in her family that stunts her ability to make sense of traumatic events. She calls this tendency to silence "a coping mechanism"⁸² in the face of ongoing trauma, a way to continue functioning despite persistent violence:

. . . 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.⁸³

While these silences may have consumed Lamwaka's life, her involvement in FEMRITE has offered her 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 involvement in FEMRITE has given her greater opportunities to work through her trauma.

FEMRITE as a Socio-Literacy Force

Beatrice Lamwaka is just one of many authors at FEMRITE, and while she has perhaps experienced greater trauma than some of the others, 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.”⁸⁴ 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 possibility of healing through narrative recuperation. FEMRITE’s social programs offer women the opportunity to tell their stories of trauma not only because they may 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.”⁸⁵ This resolute commitment to healing is perhaps one of the reasons for FEMRITE’s prolonged success: by creating a sisterhood of emotional and writing 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. Their stories mirror the acts 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 the country's history so 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."⁸⁶ Writing about "things like this" also helps create communities that will engender healing and increase understanding of trauma that has already occurred. The very creation of FEMRITE narratives illustrates the persistent need many trauma sufferers feel to develop community—whether in proximal space, in the reinstatement of lifestyles or practices that existed prior to trauma, in the creation of new ties to new communities, or through trusting communication about intimate emotions.

FEMRITE's literary and social agendas are aligned: the organization has dramatically expanded the chorus of literary voices in the country by creating a community of women writers and by including 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 will only improve our understanding of Ugandan society and of the role of literature as a tool for sociopolitical change.

Notes

- ¹ Juliet Kushaba, personal interview with the author, May 21, 2014.
- ² Andrew Latimer Bwogi, *FEMRITE* (website), accessed January 23, 2015, <http://www.femriteug.org>.
- ³ Margaret Ntakalimaze, personal interview with the author, May 23, 2014.
- ⁴ Dominick LaCapra, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 133.
- ⁵ 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," *Studies in the Novel* 40, no. 1/2 (2008): 72–85, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29533860>.
- ⁶ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
- ⁷ Kali Tal, *Worlds of Hurt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁸ Irene Visser, "Trauma Theory and Postcolonial Literary Studies," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 47, no. 3 (2011): 277, <http://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2011.569378>.

⁹ J. Roger Kurtz, "Literature, Trauma and the African Moral Imagination," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 32, no. 4 (2014): 422, <http://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2014.979607>.

¹⁰ Visser, "Trauma Theory," 277.

¹¹ Michael Rothberg, "Preface," in *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Gert Buelens, Sam Durrant, and Robert Eaglestone (London: Routledge, 2014), xii.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ For an excellent discussion of poverty-based systemic trauma in West Africa, see Aisha Fofana Ibrahim, "Connecting Testimony, Trauma, and Memory: The Sierra Leone Experience," *Pacific Coast Philology* 44, no. 2 (2009): 249–71, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25699569>.

¹⁴ Amy Novak, "Who Speaks? Who Listens? The Problem of Address in Two Nigerian Trauma Novels," *Studies in the Novel* 41, no. 1/2 (2008): 49, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29533858>.

¹⁵ Bwogi, *FEMRITE* (website).

¹⁶ James Pennebaker, "Writing About Emotional Experiences as a Therapeutic Process," *Psychological Science* 8, no. 3 (May 1997): 162, <http://jstor.org/stable/40063169>.

¹⁷ Quoted in Ibrahim, "Connecting Testimony," 260.

¹⁸ Suzette A. Henke, *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), xii. 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 ["Beyond Eurocentrism: Trauma Theory in the Global Age," in *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Gert Buelens, Samuel Durrant, and Robert Eaglestone (London: Routledge, 2014), 57]. While I agree that it is unlikely that structurally mandated trauma will be resolved merely 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" ["Questioning the Writing Cure: Contemporary Sub-Saharan African Trauma Fiction," (PhD dissertation, Duke University, 2012), 12]. Instead, writing becomes a default activity because the author "found no one with whom they could initially share their stories face-to-face" (Ibid., 14-15). Again, while narrative recuperation may be only a default solution for some, that does not negate its value for healing.

¹⁹ In May 2014, I had the privilege of interviewing twenty-one female and two male authors connected to FEMRITE. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and touched on various aspects of the author's life, including his or her education, family life, writing, and involvement in FEMRITE.

²⁰ Barbara Oketta, personal interview with the author, May 21, 2014.

²¹ Monica Arac de Nyeko, personal interview with the author, May 19, 2014.

²² Ayeta Anne Wangusa, "Foreword," in *Tears of Hope: A Collection of Short Stories by Ugandan Rural Women*, ed. Ayeta Anne Wangusa and Violet Barungi (Kampala: FEMRITE, 2003).

²³ Susan N. Kiguli and Violet Barungi, eds., *I Dare to Say: Five Testimonies by Ugandan Women Living Positively with HIV/AIDS* (Kampala: FEMRITE, 2007).

²⁴ Jackie Christie, ed., "*Today You Will Understand:*" *Women of Northern Uganda Speak Out* (UNON Pub Service: IRIN, FEMRITE, 2007).

²⁵ Violet Barungi and Hilda Twongyierwe, eds., *Beyond the Dance* (Kampala: FEMRITE, 2009).

²⁶ Violet Barungi and Hilda Twongyierwe, eds., *Farming Ashes* (Kampala: FEMRITE, 2009).

²⁷ Jocelyn Ekochu, personal interview with the author, May 30, 2014.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic, 1992), 196.

³⁰ Laurie Vikroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 19.

³¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso Press, 1991).

³² Helen Moffet, "Foreword," in *Pumpkin Seeds and Other Gifts: Stores from the FEMRITE Regional Writers Residency, 2008*, ed. Helen Moffet and Violet Barungi (Kampala: FEMRITE, 2009), v.

³³ Beatrice Lamwaka, personal interview with the author, May 20, 2014.

³⁴ Arac de Nyeko, personal interview, 2014.

³⁵ Oketta, personal interview, 2014.

³⁶ Betty Kituyi, personal interview with the author, May 23, 2014.

³⁷ Oketta, personal interview, 2014.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Quoted in Kurtz, "Literature, Trauma and the African Moral Imagination," 426.

⁴⁰ Lynda Gichanda Spencer, "Writing Women in Uganda and South Africa: Emerging Writers from Post-Repressive Regimes" (PhD diss., Stellenbosch University, 2014), 2.

⁴¹ 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 ("You Would Not Add," 2008). Eaglestone contends that African literature does not struggle with incomprehensibility or unspeakability to the same degree as Holocaust literature but instead straightforwardly presents trauma as a problem to be solved.

⁴² Wangusa, "Foreword," 2003.

⁴³ "Key Statistics," *The Resolve LRA Crisis Initiative*, accessed February 5, 2015, <http://www.TheResolve.org>.

⁴⁴ James Ojera Latigo, "Chapter 4: Northern Uganda: Tradition-based Practices in the Acholi Region," in *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experiences* (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2008), 94, accessed January 1, 2015, <http://www.idea.int>.

⁴⁵ For further reading about the LRA, see Tim Allen and Koen Vlassenroot, eds., *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality* (New York: Palgrave, 2010). Sverker Finnström's *Living with Bad Surroundings: War, History, and Everyday Moments in Northern Uganda* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008) analyzes the effect of the war on Acholi individuals and society. There are also a significant number of child-soldier memoirs and novels, which highlights the prevalence of narrative as a response to trauma. Some of these include Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone* (New York: Farrar, 2007), Uzodinma Iweala's *Beasts of No Nation* (New York: Harper, 2005), Ahmadou Kourouma's *Allah Is Not Obligated* (New York: Anchor, 2007), and Dave Eggers' popular, "experimental non-fiction novel" *What Is the What: The Autobiography of Valentine Achak Deng* (New York: Vintage, 2007) (quoted from Jason Cowley, "Why We Have Fallen For Africa's Lost Boys," *The Guardian*, April 28, 2007, accessed February 18, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/apr/29/film.fiction>).

⁴⁶ Beatrice Lamwaka, *Butterfly Dreams, To See the Mountain and Other Stories: The Caine Prize for African Writing 2011* (Oxford: New Internationalist, 2011), 59.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵³ Kai T. Erikson, *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood* (New York: Touchstone, 1976), 154.

⁵⁴ Lamwaka, *Butterfly Dreams*, 52-53.

⁵⁵ Beatrice Lamwaka, "The Garden of Mushrooms," in *Farming Ashes: Tales of Agony and Resilience*, ed. Violet Barungi and Hilda Twongyeirwe (Kampala: FEMRITE, 2009), 53.

⁵⁶ Lamwaka, personal interview, 2014.

⁵⁷ Lamwaka, "The Garden of Mushrooms," 49.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶¹ Beatrice Lamwaka, “My Father’s Home,” in *Farming Ashes: Tales of Agony and Resilience*, ed. Violet Barungi and Hilda Twongyeirwe (Kampala: FEMRITE, 2009), 54.

⁶² Lamwaka, “The Garden of Mushrooms,” 52.

⁶³ Quoted in Ron Eyerman, “Social Theory and Trauma,” *Acta Sociologica* 56 (2013): 41–53, accessed November 11, 2014, <http://doi/10.1177/0001699312461035>.

⁶⁴ A. De Swaan, “Widening Circles of Disidentification: on the Psycho- and Socio-genesis of the Hatred of Distant Strangers. Reflections on Rwanda,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 14, no. 2 (1997): 128, accessed February 6, 2015, <http://doi/10.1177/026327697014002010>.

⁶⁵ Lamwaka, “The Garden of Mushrooms,” 52.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 53.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 52.

⁶⁹ Lamwaka, “Butterfly Dreams,” 57.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 50.

⁷³ Ibid., 50–51.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 55.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 52.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 58.

⁷⁸ Petar Ramadanovich, “‘You Your Best Thing, Sethe’: Trauma’s Narcissism,” *Studies in the Novel* 40, no. 1/2 (2008): 187, accessed January 22, 2015, www.jstor.org/stable/29533866.

⁷⁹ Lamwaka, “Butterfly Dreams,” 59.

⁸⁰ Lamwaka, personal interview, 2014.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² 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.

⁸³ Lamwaka, personal interview, 2014.

⁸⁴ Doreen Strauhs, *African Literary NGOs: Power, Politics, and Participation* (New York: Palgrave, 2013), 9.

⁸⁵ Hilda Twongyeirwe, “Introduction,” *Farming Ashes* (Kampala: FEMRITE, 2009), viii.

⁸⁶ Monica Arac de Nyeko, email message to the author, January 17, 2015.