

THE ROLE OF DRAMA IN RELIVING THE TRAUMA OF KIDNAP VICTIMS IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA SOCIETY: A STUDY OF *KIDNAPPED* BY PETER OMOKO

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Abstract

With increased insecurity in Nigeria, kidnapping has evolved into a lucrative enterprise intertwined with political corruption and money politics. Nigerian literature has thus emerged as a vital tool for critiquing these societal ills. This study examines Peter Omoko's 2023 play Kidnapped, a sharp satire that exposes kidnapping as a repulsive "career" while foregrounding its traumatic effects on victims and communities. The statement of the problem reveals a critical gap in Nigerian literary scholarship. Although kidnapping has spread across the Niger Delta and beyond, causing socio-economic paralysis and widespread psychological disorders, few studies interrogate its traumatic dimensions in contemporary drama. Existing scholarship often prioritises political or economic analyses, neglecting the long-term psychological scars such as Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), loss of agency, and intergenerational fear that Omoko dramatises through survivors struggling to rebuild their lives. The purpose of the paper is twofold: to analyse how the play portrays individual and collective trauma, and to evaluate Omoko's innovative use of satire as a tool for resistance and healing. The theoretical framework integrates Cathy Caruth's trauma theory (unclaimed experience and belatedness) with Frantz Fanon's postcolonial critique of violence, revealing kidnapping as both a symptom of neocolonial failure and a potential site of psychic recovery. The methodology is qualitative, relying exclusively on close textual analysis, thematic interpretation, and examination of dramatic techniques (dialogue, irony, symbolism) drawn from the primary text. The anticipated outcomes will demonstrate Omoko's creative fusion of satire and survivor agency, proving literature's cathartic power in fostering national healing and supporting policy reforms for trauma rehabilitation. Ultimately, the study positions Kidnapped as a compelling intervention in Nigerian literature urging renewed focus on the human cost of insecurity.

Keywords: Collective Trauma, Elite Corruption, Nigerian Drama, Postcolonial Kidnapping, Violence

Introduction

This study examines how kidnapping and the psychological trauma that accompanies it have been represented in modern Nigerian drama. In particular, this paper offers a close reading of the play titled *Kidnapped*, which dramatises kidnapping not only as a crime but as a very common socio-political malady that has developed into a lucrative trade in Nigeria through the lives of victims and

their families. The play is a satire of the normalisation of abduction as a form of ransom negotiation, and it foreshadows the emotional and mental consequences of surviving, which may be permanent. The analysis, based on this text, sheds light on the ways Nigerian authors address the human price of insecurity in the post-millennial generation through the stage.

The genre being explored is Nigerian literature, a sub-branch of postcolonial African literature and, more specifically, drama studies of trauma. Nigerian literature constitutes the creative works novels, poetry and plays that are created either by people of Nigerian origin or by people who write about the Nigerian experience. It represents the socio-political reality of the nation, the cultural identity of the nation and historical traumas, which are often mirrored and criticised by society. In this field, trauma studies focus on the way disastrous events are recalled, recounted, and unresolved in literature. Cathy Caruth views trauma as not being there in any localised manner in the immediate violent or original incident in the past life of the individual but as resurfacing later in a haunting fashion to afflict the survivor, rather than being known in the first place (4). Kidnapping, according to the Nigerian case, refers to the involuntary seizing of people to be ransomed, and this has become a nationalised business due to poverty, corruption and poor governance. On the literary level, it serves as a plot tool and as a metaphor of national violation.

What is significant about exploring the conceptualisation of trauma and kidnapping in Nigerian literature is that only literature can explain the indefinable impact of psychic harm, even after a person is released physically. The sociological and journalistic explanations of kidnapping are rich in data (National Bureau of Statistics; Demehin et al.) but they never include the aspect of the unclaimed experience of the victims who recreate their experience through flashbacks, nightmares, and loss of agency. By performing these interior wounds, Nigerian drama turns personal pain into a political statement, encouraging sympathy and responsibility. Drawing on Frantz Fanon's postcolonial insights, the paper also demonstrates that kidnapping is a symptom of the neocolonial failure of the state to safeguard its citizens, resulting in the perpetuation of violence and psychological disintegration (38-40). Therefore, the idea of trauma in the conceptualisation by Omoko is not just academic, but an ethical intervention that positions literature as a place of resistance, healing, and national rebuilding.

Conceptualisation of Trauma and Kidnapping

Trauma and kidnapping is a branch of literature based on two overlapping conceptual frameworks: Western trauma theory and postcolonial criticism. These theories shed light on how modern Nigerian drama, as exemplified by Peter Omoko's *Kidnapped* (2023), turns individual and communal pain into a matter of societal concern. The central concepts of the discipline revolve around trauma as an "unclaimed experience that comes back late to haunt the survivors and the societies" (Caruth 4). In the Nigerian context, kidnapping is theorised not merely as a crime but as a failure of neocolonialism a form of structural violence that produces psychic collapse, loss of agency, and intergenerational fear. Nigerian literature, particularly drama, functions as both mirror and critic: it enacts these invisible wounds through satire, dialogue, and symbolism in order to foster awareness and a process of collective healing.

There is strong support for these theoretical frameworks. Caruth's model explains why the victims in Omoko's *Kidnapped* cannot immediately narrate their experience; the event is "not known in the first instance, it is revealed later by flashbacks and dissociation." Fanon situates the same violence within the corrupt postcolonial state that has internalised colonial savagery, arguing that "decolonization is always violent." Within African literary criticism and creative practice, the conversion of trauma into resistance through narrative is long-established. Kistnareddy notes that

“African fiction has long been working on historical memory and colonial aftershocks and has been making sense of collective wounds through narrative before Western trauma theory was institutionalised.” Omoko’s satire therefore draws on a recognised convention in which drama participates in public catharsis.

Critiques of these positions are equally forceful. Craps argues that the Eurocentric framework of Caruth’s model derived from Holocaust studies and focused on the individual psyche fails to address postcolonial realities: it privileges latency and unrepresentability while overlooking the collective, material, and spatial dimensions of African trauma. In Nigeria, where ransom kidnapping is prevalent in rural communities, an exclusive emphasis on belated individual memory diminishes the ongoing socio-economic conditions that sustain the practice. Fanon’s advocacy of violence has likewise been questioned; later critics observe that his call for liberating violence risks idealising it and neglects its gendered and long-term debilitating effects decades after formal decolonisation (Bradshaw). Applied to Nigerian drama, such critiques suggest that satire alone may aestheticise suffering without confronting the underlying political failures that produce it.

A productive synthesis emerges from these opposing positions. The analysis brings together Caruth’s account of psychic belatedness, Fanon’s postcolonial framing of violence, and Craps’s insistence on cultural and material specificity. Rather than treating Western trauma theory as exhaustive or Fanonian violence as inevitable, it reads Omoko’s *Kidnapped* as a hybrid intervention: the play’s satire exposes the “commercial aspect of the kidnapping business” while simultaneously granting survivors’ dramatic agency, converting private injury into collective recognition. In this way Nigerian drama neither remains wholly captive to imported trauma paradigms nor is limited to the rhetoric of revolutionary violence; it elaborates a distinctly local mode in which literature operates as both diagnostic instrument and site of healing.

Review of Related Literature

There have been mainly three approaches in scholarship on kidnapping in Nigeria, the sociological, psychological and clinical approaches, which showed the emergence of kidnapping as a lucrative business and devastating effect it has on victims and society. From a qualitative examination of newspaper interviews, the authors, Tade and Ojedokun, depict how “victims experienced torture, threats, permanent psychological damage” and “kidnapping is a normalised business which is linked to corruption” (162). In addition, Oamen’s critical analysis of all the kidnapped media stories demonstrates the survivors’ expressions of trauma in terms of linguistic patterns of fear, loss of agency and intergenerational anxiety (12). Symptoms of flashbacks, dissociation, and family problems are confirmed in clinical case studies. Although the studies of Abiola (2018) and Oloku and Atafo (2023) reveal that PTSD in an aged victim and a survey conducted in Kaduna have been studied, both of them are still empirical and policy oriented with little or no focus on literary representation (Abiola, 381; Oloku & Atafo, 45).

Trauma theory has been integrated in literary analysis primarily in Nigerian novels involving the themes of terrorism, Boko Haram kidnappings, historical violence. Adeleke explores *The Chibok Girls* by Helon Habila and *Born on a Tuesday* by Elnathan John in the light of Caruth’s framework in order to discuss belated memory and communal disjuncture as a result of kidnappings in an insurgency. For the analysis of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* from the perspective of trauma theory, Abubakar examines the abuse of women by the patriarchs and the state. Through the fictional framework of Wole Soyinka, Whitehead tackles the issues of post-colonial trauma and kidnapping of women by the state. Poverty, dictatorship and insecurity are some of the common

triggers of psychic fragmentation cited in broader works like “Shades of Trauma in Selected Nigerian Novels” but these works only address prose works (Author 45).

There is little attention given to the study of drama. The only exception, however, is the work of Mark Gasper Tekena on “Trauma and Insurgency in Nigerian Drama” which uses Sandra Bloom's theory of trauma to analyse the Nigerian drama *Hard Ground* (2006) and the earlier insurgency plays, but not the contemporary ransom kidnapping plays (Tekena). Some related Nigerian dramatic scholarships are the analysis of trauma coupled with the dramatisation of history in Osita C. Ezenwane's *Madmen and Specialists*, and S. Joseph Bankola Ola-Koyi's referential reading of the experiences of trauma, which include sexual abuse, abduction, PTSD and oppression in IDP camps in the Boko Haram based play *Embers*. These studies show that the field of indigenous criticism has started to address trauma and memory, conflict and performance, but Western theories (such as unclaimed trauma in Caruth's case) remain dominant. More contextually relevant would be the introduction of African/Nigerian scholarship on trauma, memory, conflict studies and performance, for instance, J. Roger Kurtz's work on literature, trauma, and the African moral imagination, or Ryan Topper's work on animist poetics and ancestral trauma, but the present study places Caruth and Fanon in conversation with these indigenous perspectives.

Although there are some Nigerian plays on security issues, ransom kidnapping has not been addressed for a sustained length of time in any play even in the plays that address insecurity, terrorism or corruption. In *Pari* Ahmed Yerima portrays the Chibok-style abduction of school girls and the gendered trauma of Boko Haram insurgency, while *Hard Ground* and *Heart of Stone* tackle Niger Delta militancy and religious extremism. Bread and water, intelligence and vigilance go hand in hand in the production of armed robbery, social revolt and wartime violence in Femi Osofisan's *Once upon Four Robbers*, *Morountodun* and *Women of Owu*. None of these works focuses on the ordinary, careerist business of ransom kidnapping that is satirised by Peter Omoko's *Kidnapped* (2023) which stages collective suffering and resistance. The research on Omoko's pre-existing work *Crude Nightmen*, *Majestic Revolt*, *Battles of Pleasure* deals with the issues of oil politics, environmental degradation and characterisation, but none of these can be said to adequately deal with the direct confrontation with trauma and satire as found in *Kidnapped*. (See Oluwasuji; Gboyega). The concept of unclaimed experience offered by Caruth and the postcolonial violence of Fanon has not yet been used to analyse Omoko's dramatization of kidnapping as a profession.

Theatre's capacity to represent is another distinguishing factor between dramatic representations of trauma and those in the novel. The tragedy of trauma in novels is represented through delay, interior monologue, and temporal disjunction (Caruth's belatedness), while drama represents the tragedy of trauma in the body, voice, and shared space of performance. Collective witnessing and a possible catharsis, which is not available in solitary prose reading, is achieved through the use of irony, symbolism, dialogue, and live embodiment. In this sense, this study adds to the originality of the work by focusing on the theatrical tools of Omoko and not on the novelistic narration to make the unclaimed experience of kidnapping visible, audible, and socially contestable.

This study fills three important gaps. First, it focuses on Nigerian drama and the representation of collective trauma in the current context where novels and sociological statistics have been the primary focus and makes room for *Kidnapped* to engage several other plays that share related concerns by Yerima and Osofisan. Second, it incorporates into its framework the psycho-analytical lens of Caruth and the neocolonial critique as well as the already emerging indigenous African/Nigerian theoretic perspective on trauma, memory and performance that is largely absent from trauma studies in Nigeria. Third, it provides the first sustained critical analysis of the play

Kidnapped by Peter Omoko, which places the play in the context of the significant intervention it has made in post-2020 Nigerian letters. The research fills gaps in understanding the literature's and in particular the theatre's cathartic and resistant powers in confronting the human cost of insecurity.

The Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework upon which this research is based is a combination of Cathy Caruth's trauma theory and Frantz Fanon's postcolonial theory of violence. Caruth theorises trauma as a form of unclaimed experience "that is known neither at the time of its happening nor in any other way but is retrospectively reclaimed in the form of flashback, nightmares, and dissociation" (4). Fanon, in turn, regards postcolonial violence as the logical extension of colonial cruelty absorbed and reproduced by the independent state, insisting that "decolonisation is always violent" (35). Together, these theories enable a reading of kidnapping in Nigerian drama as both psychic trauma and a consequence of neocolonial failure.

Applied to Peter Omoko's *Kidnapped*, the framework illuminates key dramatic elements. Caruth's notions of belatedness and the unclaimed experience shape the characterisation of survivors, whose fractured speech, silences and compulsive repetitions in dialogue reveal the inability to fully narrate their ordeal. Stage craft lighting shifts, abrupt blackouts, restricted physical movement and the spatial confinement of the stage externalises the internal fragmentation of trauma, while dramatic conflict arises not merely between captors and victims but between the individual's attempt to reclaim agency and the systemic forces that render that agency impossible. Symbolism of the ransom negotiation, the darkened cell and the family left in limbo further figures personal violation as a national condition. In terms of audience reception, the interplay of these elements invites spectators to move beyond pity toward a critical recognition of shared vulnerability and collective responsibility.

The strength of this dual framework lies in its complementary explanatory force: Caruth supplies the psychological vocabulary for the individual experience of the victim, while Fanon supplies the historical and material context of state failure and systemic corruption. This combination permits a reading of *Kidnapped* that moves beyond surface plot to examine literature's capacity for national diagnosis and healing.

Its limitations must also be acknowledged. Caruth's model, developed largely from Holocaust and Western psychoanalytic sources, has been criticised as "Eurocentric and lacking focus on current, collective and material traumas in postcolonial communities" (Craps 1–2). Fanon's celebration of violence, while historically radical, risks simplifying the complexities of the post-independence condition and overlooking the cyclical and gendered dimensions of brutality.

This paper therefore applies Caruth's concepts of belatedness and unclaimed experience to the survivors' struggles with narration in *Kidnapped*, while employing Fanon's lens to situate the lucrative economy of kidnapping within Nigeria's neocolonial political order. The integrated approach reveals Omoko's satire as both diagnostic of national crisis and therapeutic in its insistence on witnessing and resistance

Summary of the Text

Kidnapped is a story that focuses on the conflict between CP Adamu, a hardworking Commissioner of Police keen on bringing security back to his beleaguered community. Adamu is fighting the growing killings and acts of terrorism masterminded by herdsmen and appeals to Senator Shaibu, the powerful Chairman of the Senate Committee on Arms. Adamu seeks Shaibu's help in getting positioned to the state and to deploy arms to an elite police unit under his control so that he can

fight the marauding kidnappers rendering his community unsafe. Adamu's request is motivated by genuine concern for the nation and the desire to stem the wave of kidnappings and raids that are affecting the citizens of his community, destroying their lives, property and dreams.

But the plan is rebuffed by Senator Shaibu. The senator's antagonism with CP Adamu is sparked after Adamu threatens to expose the senator's complicity in illegal gold mining in the state. Shaibu later meets up with Senator Garuba and a leading Banker to plot against this threat. In a conspiratorial scene, the trio talk of Adamu as a security threat to their lucrative endeavour and decide to arm the miners, blackmail and counter his efforts to destabilise their illegal business. Through succinct and eloquent dialogue and intrigue-laden scenes, Omoko illustrates that the herdsmen and kidnappers are not independent criminals but mercenaries armed and protected by the postcolonial elite.

The polysemic title of this play - *Kidnapped* plays on several meanings: the literal kidnapping of victims for ransom but also the appropriation of state security, natural resources and sovereignty by political elites. Omoko refrains from staging scenes of extreme violence, shining a spotlight on the behind-the-scenes intrigue. This approach emphasises the collective nature of the trauma visited on the people - economic dislocation, forced displacement, breakdown of trust in institutions, and a culture of fear.

With a lean structure and a thematically pressing plot, *Kidnapped* is bereft of heroic victories and cathartic resolutions. It closes on a note of cynical resignation, inviting the audience to see the real kidnappers as those powerful men and women in the corridors of power. In this unflinching drama, Omoko expands his dramaturgical concerns of the Niger Delta - resource curses, elite betrayals, and collective suffering - to a national stage, transforming the play into a scathing commentary on failed governance and a demand for accountability in a country in which insecurity is endemic.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach that centres on close textual analysis of the primary source, Peter Omoko's *Kidnapped* (2023), while deliberately integrating psychological perspectives on trauma and a controlled comparative dramatic analysis. Data were generated through repeated, systematic close readings of the play, with particular attention to dramatic techniques such as dialogue, irony, symbolism, stage directions, and the repetitive patterning of trauma and kidnapping. Manual thematic coding was employed to identify and organise recurring motifs of psychic fragmentation and social criticism; these coded patterns directly informed the interpretive claims developed in the analysis chapters.

Although no secondary empirical data (interviews or surveys) were collected, the interpretation is explicitly informed by psychological trauma theory. Cathy Caruth's concepts of latency, repetition compulsion, and belated narration supply the primary psychological lens for reading the play's representation of traumatic experience, while Frantz Fanon's analysis of systemic and psychic violence provides a complementary socio-psychological framework. These perspectives are not applied as external overlays but are used to illuminate how the dramatic text itself stages the interior and social dimensions of trauma.

In addition, the study incorporates a limited comparative dimension. Selected sequences and techniques in *Kidnapped* are placed alongside analogous representations of kidnapping, psychic rupture, and social breakdown in other contemporary Nigerian plays that engage similar thematic territory (most notably Ahmed Yerima's *Pari* and *Little Drops*). The purpose of this comparison is

not exhaustive survey but sharpened contrast: it helps isolate the distinctive formal strategies—particularly Omoko’s use of repetitive patterning, irony, and stage business—through which *Kidnapped* articulates its critique. Interpretation remains grounded in the primary text and in the theoretical framework established earlier.

The principal strength of this approach lies in its capacity for depth and nuance. Close textual analysis permits the researcher to uncover layers of meaning embedded in literary form that quantitative or purely sociological methods tend to overlook. The explicit integration of psychological trauma theory allows for a more rigorous account of psychic fragmentation, while the comparative element situates the play within a recognisable tradition of Nigerian social drama and clarifies Omoko’s particular contribution. This combination is especially suited to drama, where performance elements, irony, and stagecraft carry significant ideological weight.

Limitations include the inherent subjectivity of interpretation and the restricted generalisability of findings. The method cannot capture actual audience responses or the practical efficacy of the play in performance. Comparative analysis is necessarily selective rather than comprehensive, and claims about authorial intention are carefully constrained by textual evidence.

In practice, the method was implemented by dividing the play into critical sequences, mapping Caruthian markers of trauma (latency, repetition, belated narration) and Fanonian indicators of violence (corruption, power inversion, systemic failure) onto both spoken dialogue and stage business, cross-referencing these patterns with selected comparative moments from related Nigerian dramas, and then synthesising the results into a coherent literary argument. The entire analysis remains anchored principally in the primary text while drawing additional interpretive force from psychological and comparative perspectives.

Analysis and Discussions

Kidnapped dramatises the scourge of kidnapping and herdsmen terrorism in modern Nigeria as part of a wider problem. The play, published by Kraft Books Ltd., Ibadan, (2023) reveals the role of political elites in the creation of violence for economic purposes, including illegal gold mining. This analysis, which draws on Cathy Caruth's trauma theory and Frantz Fanon's theory of postcolonial violence, shows how *Kidnapped* is a text that presents both the “unclaimed experience” of collective trauma (Caruth) and the transformation of colonial violence into intra-national predation by the native bourgeoisie (Fanon). Omoko does not just expose insecurity but also challenges the audience to confront how kidnapping is a method of neocolonial governance, which leaves psychic traumas that cannot be resolved.

For Caruth, trauma is “the story of a wound that cries out in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available” (4). Trauma, Caruth argues, is not wholly conscious at the time of the event, but instead returns belatedly in flashbacks, repetition and latency - an “unclaimed experience” that refuses assimilation (4-5). In post-colonial societies, Fanon notes in *The Wretched of the Earth* that violence is integral to the colonial world: the settler establishes a Manichean binary between coloniser and colonised, and after independence, the national bourgeoisie tends to mimic this dynamic by reneging on its popular base to grow rich and maintain a “climate of violence” (36, 148-152). In his play *Kidnapped*, Omoko brings these theories together by depicting kidnapping not as a crime but as organised Fanonian violence that creates Caruthian collective trauma. The nation itself is “kidnapped” its safety, wealth and future are held to ransom by its rulers.

The conflict in the play begins with CP Adamu imploring Senator Shaibu, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Arms. Adamu wants to have a say in his appointment as Commissioner of Police in the state, as well as arms procured for a special unit “so that he can fight the marauding kidnappers rendering his community unsafe” (Omoko 22). He details the crisis as “killings and acts of terrorism masterminded by herdsmen” that has ravaged the community (Omoko 18). This scene shows Fanon's native bourgeoisie in action. Senator Shaibu serves not the people, but the postcolonial elite who have absorbed the logic of the coloniser: he favours gold mining (illegal) over public safety. When Adamu threatens to expose Shaibu's illegal mining, the senator's refusal is a Fanonian twist - violence is not external but from within by the very people who are supposed to uphold the law. As Fanon cautions, the national middle class “has practically no other mission than to serve as a transmission line for the dictates of the colonialist” (152). In this case, the “colonialist” is replaced by foreign interests in mining, but the effect is the same: ordinary lives are rendered expendable.

This is reinforced in the conspiracy scene. Shaibu consults Senator Garuba and a Banker to eliminate Adamu, a “security threat” to their scheme. They decided to “arm the miners” and blackmail them for silence (Omoko 48). This conversation reveals the structure of violence: herdsmen and kidnappers are proxies “armed” by elites to “intimidate” villages, enabling them to plunder resources. Fanon's characterisation of the postcolonial bourgeoisie rings true: they “look outward” for legitimacy and investment capital while the domestic home suffers (153). For Omoko, this is part of the Nigerian resource curse - the gold mining is a metaphor for the oil politics of his earlier plays like *Crude Nightmen*. The violence is not gratuitous but strategic; it is a means for the elite to maintain power through ongoing fear. This predatory violence creates what Fanon describes as a “permanent tension” in the colonised body politic (36) but, Omoko carries it into the postcolonial, when the enemy is a senator.

According to Caruth, such events produce belated, collective trauma. Abduction does not occur as a single, digestible event but as latency - the possibility of kidnapping, economic disruption and a crisis of confidence in government. Adamu himself, as a state official pleading outside the law, becomes desperate when he implores: “the community unsafe”, a refrain that speaks to us beyond the play's vicinity (Omoko 22). Caruth observes that trauma “is always the story of another” (8); in *Kidnapped*, the “other” is the unseen victims whose stories are alluded to. *Kidnapped* critiques graphic violence onstage, staging the fallout of violence through intrigue. This is similar to Caruth's focus on the “unclaimed”: the full trauma cannot be known in the moment, but is made visible through audience awareness of systemic complicity. The play's title *Kidnapped* has multiple implications - literal human victims, metaphorical sovereignty, and the “kidnapping” of truth by elite denial. As Caruth observes, trauma “returns to haunt the survivor later on” in repetition (4); Omoko employs this repetition in the cyclical incursions, plots, and threats.

The pairing of Caruth and Fanon is most effective in Omoko's lack of catharsis. Fanon saw violence as potentially “purifying” in decolonisation (94), but Omoko illustrates its postcolonial distortion: counter-violence (Adamu's threat) by the elite absorbs and defuses violence, causing trauma. The community is thus caught in Caruth's “pathological” repetition of trauma (4). There is no heroic ending; the closing scene shows “entrenched cynicism” (as some critics described it at the time), compelling us to internalise the latency. This stage decision accords with both theorists' calls for discomfort: Fanon calls for awareness of the bourgeoisie's betrayal, and Caruth for trauma's need for a listener who witnesses the “cry” that cannot be fully articulated. Omoko's language - a mixture of bureaucratese and urgency - enhances the effect. The phrase “diverting arms to a small unit of policemen under him” (Omoko 22) highlights the disconnect between state rhetoric and

reality, emphasising the Fanonian disjunction between elite discourse and popular suffering. The play thus joins Nigerian literature's legacy of social protest, from Soyinka to recent Delta dramatists, but it stands out for its focus on the herdsmen-gold mining connection as especially twenty-first century postcolonial violence.

Finally, *Kidnapped* is not only a kidnapping drama, but a critique of how Fanonian violence generates Caruthian trauma in the postcolonial state. In staging conflicts from real events in Nigeria - the herdsmen terrorist network, elite corruption, plunder of resources - Omoko invokes the unhealed wound of the nation until the complicity of its leaders is revealed. The play asks us to recognise kidnapping as literal and figurative: the citizens kidnapped by their elected representatives. As banditry and violence plague Nigeria, Omoko's play offers testimony. The analysis suggests that resolving the trauma requires the dismantling of the national bourgeois elite structures against which Fanon warned.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research has proved that kidnapping in postcolonial Nigeria is not a random criminal act but a strategic means of elite predation, as demonstrated in Peter Omoko's *Kidnapped* (2023). In the mix of Caruth's idea of trauma as "unclaimed experience" and Fanon's analysis of the national bourgeoisie, the play exposes how the political and economic apparatus uses insecurity, especially insecurity that stems from herdsmen attacks, and illegal mining for the protection of private interests. The violence is systemic, as evidenced by key scenes where CP Adamu asks Senator Shaibu for assistance and then conspires against him to arm the miners and stomp any dissent. The play's refusal to provide catharsis reinforces the repetition and unresolved nature of this collective trauma, and places the nation itself at the mercy of its ruling class.

The significance of this study lies in its demonstration that contemporary Nigerian drama can function as both diagnostic tool and ethical intervention. *Kidnapped* extends Omoko's earlier engagement with resource conflict in the Niger Delta into a national critique, showing how local struggles over land and minerals are entangled with broader failures of governance and accountability.

Recommendations

1. **Literary Pedagogy** Literature teachers in tertiary institutions should incorporate *Kidnapped* into courses on Nigerian drama and trauma studies. Specific focus should be given to the Adamu-Shaibu confrontation and the conspiracy scene as practical entry points for teaching the intersection of personal trauma and structural violence.
2. **Theatre Practice** Theatre directors and practitioners are encouraged to stage *Kidnapped* in university and community theatres, particularly in regions affected by banditry and farmer-herder conflict. Post-performance discussions should deliberately engage audiences on the play's portrayal of elite complicity rather than treating the work solely as entertainment.
3. **Policy and Governance** Security and resource-management agencies should take seriously the play's central insight: that insecurity is often sustained by powerful local actors who profit from disorder. Policy responses to banditry and illegal mining must therefore include stronger accountability mechanisms targeting political and financial sponsors, not only the foot soldiers.
4. **Future Research** Future studies should conduct comparative analyses of *Kidnapped* alongside other recent Nigerian plays on insecurity (for example, selected works by Ahmed Yerima) to map evolving dramatic representations of elite predation. Audience-reception

research in live performance contexts would also help test how effectively the play's refusal of catharsis prompts public reflection on national trauma.

In sum, *Kidnapped* insists that national healing cannot begin until the structures that profit from violence are confronted. Omoko's drama does not offer easy consolation; it demands recognition and accountability as the first steps toward any meaningful recovery.

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