

'The Herd' as a Filmic Narrative of Banditry and the Poetics of Trauma in Nigerian Cinema

Yvonne Ikpemhinoghena Ewedemi

Babcock University

ewedemi0120@pg.babcock.edu.ng

Abstract

Nigeria's fifteen years of escalating crisis of banditry have generated new cultural texts attempting to narrate the psychological and social dimensions of violence. This paper examines *The Herd* (2025), a recent Netflix original film centred on ransom kidnapping in central and northern Nigeria. It argues that *The Herd* functions as a trauma narrative that encodes fear, bodily vulnerability and communal disintegration through silence, fragmented dialogue and narrative disruption. Through the close reading of selected scenes, the paper demonstrates that the film reframes banditry not as discrete political events but as traumatic processes that reshape memory, identity, agency and community. Trauma theory, which is central to the argument, frames banditry as a continuum rather than a singular violent incident. The film's fragmented temporality, bodily disintegration and unresolved ending function as narrative strategies that reproduce the structural experience of trauma. The analysis further reveals how *The Herd* situates trauma within conditions of state absence and insecurity, contributing to the developing canon of Nigerian insecurity narratives by foregrounding survival, psychological rupture and the persistence of fear beyond captivity.

Key words: Banditry, Trauma, Kidnapping, Nigerian Cinema, Narrative

Introduction

Within the last 20 years, insecurity crisis in Nigeria has evolved into a multi-layered national tragedy that has reshaped the daily life of citizens residing in the central and northern regions of the country, particularly. Banditry, cattle-related violence, armed pastoral conflict, rural terrorism and ransom kidnapping have converged for years, forming a pervasive ecology of fear. Farmers and herders have found themselves trapped in endless cycles of conflict, with entire communities being displaced, while intermittent interventions by the state have proven to be insufficient; thus, restoring stability or trust has been ineffective. Academic studies treat these crises as political, security or economic problems; however, the cultural dimensions of banditry shaping how Nigerians negotiate, imagine, narrate and remember the terror remain largely underexplored. Within the expanding landscape of insecurity narratives, Netflix has emerged with *The Herd* (2025) as a crucial cultural and artistic resource.

As a Netflix-distributed Nigerian film directed by Daniel Etim Effiong, the film dramatises banditry as not merely an act of violence but as a narrative and linguistic phenomenon shaped by silence, trauma, power and negotiation. The movie details the survival of Gosi and Derin from the den of northern kidnapers. While leaving the church in hopes of retiring to their hotel room after their wedding, Derin and Fola (the newlywedded couple) are kidnapped alongside their

friend, Gosi and other travellers found on the road. Fola is immediately killed while the killer mentions his intention of marrying Derin immediately. The kidnapped victims are led into the forest, where their travail of escape and terror begins.

While cinema is often interpreted through film theory, *The Herd* can be approached as a literary-linguistic text whose story strategies mirror the wider cultural grammar of insecurity in Nigeria. From its opening scene (the wedding) to its final sequence (the reconciliation of Gosi and Derin with members of their families), the film deploys a cautiously crafted linguistic economy ranging from the threats of the armed bandits, the fear-inflected interactions of the captives with one another, ransom negotiation and hopelessly quiet moments where silence functions as a survival strategy and coerced submission. These features converge in positioning *The Herd* within a developing canon of Nigerian cultural works attempting to make sense of the senseless violent acts reshaping the country's rural geographies. As a movie, it states the power dynamics of captivity visually, and as a text, it encodes terror, trauma and communal disintegration through linguistic, symbolic and structural choices that call for literary analysis. When read through narrative theory, the formal choices are not a mere representation of violence but a reproduction of the experiential structure of trauma. As Judith Herman (1992) and Cathy Caruth (1996) argue, trauma disrupts linear temporality by fragmenting memory and resisting narrative closure. In *The Herd*, banditry is not narrated as a distinct violent incident but as an ongoing traumatic condition reshaping perception, identity and agency.

The relevance of this Netflix production becomes clearer when placed within emerging canons of Nigerian insecurity narratives. Works such as Helon Habila's *The Chibok Girls*, Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday*, and the film *The Milkmaid* have demonstrated how cinema and literature can converge to render terror narratively significant by providing a voice for the silenced, the forgotten, and the stolen (Habila; John; *The Milkmaid*). *The Herd* joins this discourse as it focuses on a dimension of violence, banditry and ransom kidnapping that has plagued the country as one of its most defining security issues in contemporary times. The film provides an affective, symbolic, and interpretive account of what it takes to live, negotiate, fear, and survive under a regime filled with terror.

It is interesting to note that this transition from reportage to narrative enables viewers to understand banditry not as an event but as an immersive experience marked by internalized terror, psychological fragmentation, and disrupted communal memory. For this reason, this paper approaches *The Herd* primarily as a trauma narrative, drawing on trauma theory to examine how captivity restructures memory, embodiment, and narrative coherence.

As articulated by Judith Herman (1992) and Cathy Caruth (1996), trauma theory offers insight into how individuals and communities process extreme violence through non-linear, fragmented, or repetitive narration. In the film, trauma

surfaces not only through the emotional breakdowns of characters but also through formal choices such as characters being shot while planning an escape, Gosi being forced to chop his friend, Fola, to pieces, and the framing of captives within constricted spaces. In trauma narratives, fragmented speech, prolonged silence, and whispered conversations reflect the collapse of expressive control under violence, wherein language itself becomes dangerous.

Furthermore, despite increasing scholarship on Nigerian terrorism narratives, limited attention has been paid to how filmic narratives formally deploy dialogue, silence, and speech restraint in representing banditry, particularly within contemporary Nigerian cinema. Existing studies often concentrate on insurgency or Boko Haram narratives, leaving banditry largely examined through political, security, or visual frameworks rather than through close attention to narrative form. In addition, scholarship on Nigerian insecurity cinema frequently emphasises visual spectacle or socio-political commentary, with less focus on how silence, fragmented dialogue, and narrative disruption function as aesthetic strategies that shape the audience's experience of terror. This paper addresses this gap by examining *The Herd* as a filmic trauma narrative, showing how restrained language and disrupted narration encode banditry as an ongoing traumatic condition that extends beyond the moment of violence.

In all, this paper examines *The Herd* as a trauma narrative that focuses on how silence, captivity, unresolved endings and bodily vulnerability encode banditry as a disturbing traumatic condition.

Literature Review

Studies on terrorism and banditry within African literature and film have evolved alongside the intensifying levels of violence haunting the continent. Specifically in Nigeria, insecurity narratives have become central to contemporary cultural production, shaping how violence, fear, and survival are imagined and narrated within literary and cinematic forms. Scholars examining violence in Nigerian narratives have largely focused on militancy in the Niger Delta, memories of the Civil War, or Boko Haram insurgency, with comparatively less attention paid to how banditry is formally represented within cinematic narratives. However, recent Nigerian films and literary texts have begun to construct a growing representational discourse around banditry and kidnapping, foregrounding the everyday terror experienced in central and northern Nigeria.

Within African literary and cultural studies, representations of violence have historically been linked to periods of political upheaval and state instability. Foundational literary works such as Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* foreground brutality as a consequence of colonial disruption and authoritarian governance (Achebe; Ngũgĩ). In the twenty-first century, however, representations of violence in African cultural production

have increasingly shifted toward fragmented and decentralised forms that mirror the erosion of state authority. In the Nigerian context, narratives of insecurity now extend across novels, memoirs, journalistic accounts, and film, where violence is rendered through visual, narrative, and affective strategies. Texts such as Helon Habila's *The Chibok Girls* illustrate how abduction narratives register the lingering psychological effects of violence beyond media attention, while *Born on a Tuesday* by Elnathan John depicts how prolonged exposure to fear produces moral ambiguity and ethical tension rather than clear oppositions between good and evil. Collectively, these narratives demonstrate that communal violence and terrorism function not merely as background events but as structuring forces that shape narrative form, character development, and thematic emphasis.

Within film scholarship, representations of terrorism and insecurity have attracted growing attention, particularly in analyses of Nigerian cinema. Films such as *The Milkmaid* have generated critical discussions focused on visual realism, thematic representation, and socio-political critique, especially in relation to captivity, forced conversion, and gendered violence. However, such studies have not consistently foregrounded narrative language, silence, or formal restraint as central analytical categories.

More broadly, African film theorists such as Manthia Diawara and Teshome Gabriel have argued that cinematic language and form are not neutral but function as strategic resources through which power, resistance, and survival are negotiated (Diawara; Gabriel). Despite these theoretical insights, relatively little attention has been paid to close, scene-based analyses of contemporary Nigerian films that examine how dialogue, silence, and narrative disruption operate within representations of banditry.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs trauma theory, narrative poetics and African film theory as its frameworks in analysing how *The Herd* represents banditry as a traumatic experience within Nigerian cinema. Trauma theory aids in providing the major analytical lens for understanding how narrative coherence, subjectivity in cultural texts and memory are disrupted by extreme violence. In her *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Cathy Caruth conceptualises trauma as an experience that resists direct narration and appears in fragmented and repetitive forms. Judith Herman extends trauma theory as she emphasises its social and relational aspects. In *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), Herman avers that traumatic violence erodes trust, social bonds and community. Her framework is specifically useful in examining how fear, coercion and captivity in *The Herd* destabilizes communal cohesion and interpersonal relationships while Caruth's framework encodes violence through silence, unresolved narrative closure and fractured temporality. The paper is further enriched with Narrative poetics as it

provides tools to analyse how violence is structured formally within narration. Gérard Genette's theory of narrative time, as articulated in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1980), provides a path to understand how techniques like temporal disruption and pacing showcase psychological dislocation under traumatic conditions. More so, Seymour Chatman's distinction between story and discourse in *Story and Discourse* (1978) provides a clarification on how narrative meaning is built by the manner in which they are arranged and presented. Finally, African film theory offers a contextual framework for reading cinema as a site of symbolic, performative and narrative meaning. Scholars like Teshome Gabriel and Manthia Diawara have opined that African cinema is an extension of literary and oral traditions carried out through storytelling that blends performance, memory, collective memory and silence. Gabriel's idealisation of African cinema as an aesthetic of resistance and Diawara's insistence on power and representation in African film foreground the cultural and political importance of narrative form. With these perspectives, this paper highlights *The Herd* as a filmic text where silence, dialogue and narrative control act as expressive strategies for the negotiation of power, survival and trauma.

Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative approach to its analysis. It examines *The Herd* as a narrative film and places focus on the descriptive ways in which the filmmaker uses language through communication, dialogue and silence among characters as potent tools for depicting settings, actions and violent incidents. In this paper, the film is taken as a linguistic text, in that, meaning is gotten through verbal restraint, communicative interactions and spoken exchanges. The data for analysis consists of selected scenes from *The Herd* that illustrate these narrative and linguistic strategies. These include the abduction following the wedding ceremony, interactions between captors and captives, ransom negotiation sequences, moments of tension among the victims and the bandits, and scenes depicting the aftermath of violence. The analysis of these scenes illustrates how silence and language act within the narrative structure of the film to encode trauma, fear and power.

Discussion and Findings

The Language of Terror

In *The Herd*, terror emerges not only from the visibility of gun violence, machetes, or physical domination but also through language, evident in sudden shifts in tone, abrupt commands, prolonged silences, and the verbal economy of negotiation that structures relationships between captors and captives. In using silence, dialogue and controlled speech, the film shapes the audience's experience of fear while revealing the psychological impact banditry leaves on its victims. Its result is a

linguistic regime where speech acts as a weapon, silence functions as a strategy, and language is a space of psychological domination. The terror that unfolds in the film is not merely physical but discursive as it reflects the truth of banditry, whereby spoken words can determine one's life or death.

The first encounter between captors and captives occurs when vehicles pause as cattle herders move their animals from the expressway. However, the linguistic conditions governing subsequent interactions emerge when gunshots are fired, and the armed herders order everyone out of their vehicles. The bandits speak first without hesitation, thereby asserting dominance through their voices before exerting violence with their guns, as several passengers are killed. They issue short, blunt directives such as “move” and “get down.” These commands derive authority from their brevity, signalling a communicative style that leaves no room for negotiation. The abruptness of their speech reflects a form of linguistic minimalism that mirrors the expectation that victims must remain emotionally restrained. The captives are therefore compelled to suspend their linguistic agency to survive. Here, language becomes a form of imprisonment, as the captors' control not only the physical movement of the captives but also their speech and rhythm of interaction. A captive is killed on the spot after being overheard planning an escape. It is later revealed that the bandit leader's wife understands and speaks English. As trauma theory suggests, conditions of terror often involve the erosion of agency through coercion and enforced silence (Herman, 1992). In *The Herd*, this dynamic is reflected in how captives must regulate speech to survive. More so, there is an existing patterned contrast between the speech patterns of bandits and captives, which heightens tension. The bandits speak with aggression, while the victims respond in fragmented and hesitant speech. They stutter, whisper, and often fail to complete their sentences. Such speech fragmentation aligns with trauma theory's account of how extreme violence disrupts expressive coherence. In *The Herd*, the victims are dislocated by terror as their linguistic confidence progressively deflates. Trauma is capable of unsettling identity and narration when one is placed under coercive conditions.

Another unsettling linguistic resource depicted in the movie is silence. It functions as a communicative force shaping meaning through absence, and not presence. Silence echoes Judith Herman's argument, which states that trauma expresses itself through unsaid words and the gaps in narrative where emotions and memory converge. Silence is also weaponised by the bandits strategically. They refuse to answer questions and withdraw from verbal engagement, thus creating an atmosphere of unpredictability. The ensuing silence makes the captives anticipate danger and heightens emotional instability. Also, negotiation illuminates this linguistic economy as ransom negotiation is not a simple transactional process but a battle of wits wherein language carries the weight of life and death. Gosi's wife was commanded to deliver twenty million naira cash, or her husband would die within

24 hours. This negotiation unfolded through a tense exchange that was marked by calculated rhetorical strategies. She does not attempt to buy time as she enters an active mode, seeking help from everywhere. She is countered with threats by the bandits. The dialogue in the scene is measured and sharp and reflects the seriousness of the situation.

Indigenous language is used within the film to construct terror. The local dialects spoken by the bandits' function as tools of anger, strategic exclusion, and emphasis. These moments mark linguistic boundaries that reinforce power. Unsure of what the bandits are communicating among themselves, the captives experience heightened fear, scared for their lives. They had seen one of them get shot on a call with his folks while asking for ransom money. Dominance is further reinforced when bandits speak in a language the captives cannot grasp, and this inability to interpret their words amplifies vulnerability. Captives also occasionally resort to indigenous expressions of prayer or fear, slipping into familiar linguistic structures that offer temporary psychological refuge. The film further uses threats as a key linguistic device. These threats do not primarily function to exchange information but to produce emotional effects. They operate as performative declarations of power that continually remind the captives of their fragile reality. The captors use repeated verbal threats as a mechanism of domination, thus diminishing the sense of agency the captives try to wield.

Narrative Poetics of Banditry

Although the language of *The Herd* generates immediate fear in viewers, the film's deeper meanings emerge through its narrative organisation, spatial composition, and temporal pacing. Rather than presenting banditry as a distinct disruptive incident, the film portrays violence as a recurring condition capable of shaping narrative expectation and movement. When cars were stopped, and the passengers were ordered to leave the vehicles, walk through a dense forest path, negotiate their survival as they begged for food, and one escaped, all of these happened without a clear progression toward resolution. It produced a cyclical narrative pattern where tension is not released but sustained. Such structural repetition places banditry as a continuous presence within the realm of the film as form is foregrounded over plot progression, while linear narrative development is resisted.

This resistance to linear progression reflects David Bordwell's parametric narration from a narratological perspective. For Bordwell (162), stylistic patterning and repetition strongly arranges viewer's experience more than the causal advancement of the plot. In *The Herd*, narrative repetition and delay are formal strategies used in communicating insecurity and enable fear to persist beyond individual scenes. Furthermore, spatial design adds to the poetic construction of banditry. Actions largely take place within bushes and makeshift enclaves as *The Herd* uses space as an active narrative force and not as a neutral

backdrop. The forest is portrayed as a site of restricted visibility to disorient the captives, thus producing a spatial logic that restricts movement while vulnerability is intensified. The captives have no idea where they were and no hope of running into help if they dare escape. While the bandits move with ease within this terrain, the winding paths and dense vegetation deny the captives of clear orientation. In other words, the bandits' ease of movement builds an asymmetry of power encoded through this spatial familiarity. As Giuliana Bruno (56) argues, cinematic space acts as an affective environment shaping perception and emotional response instead of merely containing action. With this in mind, space in *The Herd* transforms into a poetic medium through which fear and domination are communicated without dialogue.

More so, symbolic imagery deepens spatial poetics. Scenes where Gosi chops the body of his friend into pieces in front of the captives leave a recurring image in their minds. Such an image makes captives afraid of what the captors can or will do to them if they do not obey their orders. Darkness also functions as a formal narrative device as it builds suspense and compels reliance on silence, movement and sound. With the bandits moving in the dark, captives are unable to retrace their way to the main road. This is evident when, after the movie ends with the escape of Gosi and Derin, the NYSC corper who had earlier escaped for days was finally seen running to the road. Within the cultural context of Nigeria, darkness most times signifies moral ambiguity and danger. The return of daylight does not restore safety but reveals the exposed landscape to intensify desolation and maintain tension within the story. The alternation between day and night builds a visual rhythm where emotional pacing is regulated and the instability in the film is reinforced.

For its climactic moments, tension is increased through controlled pacing, conscious use of visual restraint and tight framing. The film does not fully expose acts of violence as it redirects attention from spectacle to consequence. When Gosi chops Fola's body, the sound and blood stains on his shirt are used to visualise the scene. Also, when the pastor's freezer is opened to reveal body parts, the camera does not fully zoom in. For Brown (98), restraints in movies align with modern film scholarship that emphasises affective engagement, not graphic display, as withholding turns into a poetic strategy that heightens emotional impact. Through the limitation of what is shown, *The Herd* compels viewers to imagine violence, thereby sustaining unease beyond the moment of action.

The open-ended conclusion of *The Herd* reinforces this narrative poetics. The film offers neither emotional catharsis nor definitive resolution as violence is left suspended beyond its final scene. The lack of closure is a formal choice that aligns with the socio-political reality the film portrays. Some captives are never found in reality, while some are lucky to be rescued or escape without dying. The refusal of a neat resolution has *The Herd* presenting banditry as continuous and not

contained, thus enabling the narrative itself to shape the moral and emotional positioning of the audience.

Trauma, Memory and the Captive Body

In *The Herd*, trauma is not merely a thematic presence but is inscribed through embodied experience, shaping how fear, memory, and vulnerability are expressed on screen. Trauma is visible in the film through bodily exposure (captives are exposed to dead bodies), physical exhaustion (they walk from the afternoon of their capture till nighttime) and constrained movement (they only sat when they were told to rest). This emphasises captivity to extend beyond physical confinement. Rather than depict trauma as an abstract psychological state, *The Herd* situates it within the material vulnerability of the body under threat.

In other words, captivity is extended beyond bodily restraint and entails the disruption of emotional, cognitive and sensory coherence. For Barker (38), cinematic representations of trauma frequently function through the body where posture, gesture and physical response communicate the things that dialogue cannot. In *The Herd*, this is evident in the captives' constrained gestures, lowered gazes, and hesitant movements, through which fear is continually registered.

From the moment the bandits halt the vehicles and command passengers to step out, trauma is immediately inscribed on the bodies of the captives. The film's use of close-up shots intensifies this bodily exposure, particularly in scenes involving Derin after Fola is killed. These visual choices force viewers into the claustrophobic space of captivity, aligning the audience with the captives' physical vulnerability.

Characters' bodily reactions reflect immediate physiological responses to terror, including trembling, involuntary flinching, and hypervigilance. Brown (101) opines that fear is communicated through corporeal response and not explanatory narration. Contemporary trauma-film scholars identify this as affective embodiment. In this way, the film foregrounds the body as a primary site through which violence is experienced and remembered.

Meanwhile, memory in *The Herd* is similarly shaped through embodied disruption rather than coherent recollection. Derin's inner voice returns to fragments of a song she shared with Fola shortly before their abduction. These memories emerge in brief, disjointed moments, triggered by fear and sensory cues rather than deliberate reflection. They do not function as comforting recollections of the past but as ruptured reminders of her loss and dislocation. From the church wedding, Fola and Derin had run into the car to begin their journey to forever, but it was short-lived due to the abduction and death of Fola.

Such memory fragmentation reflects what Ann Kaplan describes as the cinematic representation of trauma through interrupted recall and sensory intrusion. Kaplan (27) states that memory unpredictably surfaces instead of

appearing as a linear narration. In *The Herd*, memory operates less as narrative continuity and more as a reminder of what has been violently severed. The film further explores trauma through vocal restraint and silence. Captives frequently communicate in whispers or avoid speech altogether, as seen in Derin's prolonged silence and Gosi's fragmented attempts to coordinate escape. Speech becomes laborious and cautious, as any verbal misstep may provoke violence. When Derin finally speaks to Gosi, her speech is filled with blame. Gosi had told Fola to run. For Derin, if Gosi had not mentioned running to Fola, he would still be alive. His attempt to run, then turning back to take Derin along with him, led to the bandits shooting him on the spot. Here, language is subordinated to survival, and silence becomes a protective strategy rather than an absence of expression. Chion (57) opines that silence is a communicative mode in contexts of coercion where speech withheld does convey fear and constraint more strongly than dialogue.

The bodies of the captives also become sites of degradation and moral injury. Scenes in which corn is thrown at them after prolonged deprivation foreground the humiliation and forced dependency imposed by the captors. Their struggle for sustenance is an underscoring of how violence extends beyond physical harm and includes the erosion of one's dignity. Trauma is further depicted as a collective condition through the breakdown of communal trust. Members of the surrounding community collaborate with the bandits, offering warnings rather than protection. This complicity reveals how violence fractures social bonds and normalises fear within communal life. Such representation supports Judith Herman's argument. Judith (56) states that trauma operates not only at the individual level but also as a relational rupture that destabilises collective trust.

Ultimately, *The Herd* reflects lived realities of trauma in which survival does not mark an end to fear or memory. Instead, trauma persists within the body and within fractured social relations, reinforcing the film's emphasis on endurance rather than recovery.

The Herd as a Socio-Political Critique

Beyond its narrative construction and representational strategies, *The Herd* functions as a socio-political document that interprets Nigeria's insecurity crisis through cinematic storytelling. The film does not shy away from engaging with the structural conditions sustaining banditry but reveals a landscape configured by economic precarity, state absence, uneven power relations and fractured social contracts. Through the narration of violence using the fictional experiences of captives and captors, the film goes beyond personal suffering as it critiques the wider socio-political systems that enable insecurity to persist. In this sense, violence is structurally produced.

A major socio-political intervention in *The Herd* is its portrayal of state absence. The narrative unfolds through the perspectives of captives, their families,

local communities, and the bandits themselves, while formal state authority remains largely invisible. This absence is not incidental but thematic, reflecting the lived reality of many Nigerians for whom state protection is unreliable or nonexistent. Mbembe (92) describes this as zones of abandonment where citizens are exposed to violence and unsure of institutional protection. The film further critiques insecurity through its depiction of what may be described as a ransom economy. Ransom economy is an informal system where human bodies are exchanged as commodities for profit and survival. The captors kidnap their victims and only release them when money is paid. Meanwhile, if any die, they sell their body parts to organ traffickers. In *The Herd*, kidnapping operates as an economic practice sustained by unemployment, poverty, and the collapse of rural livelihoods. While the film does not excuse the bandits' actions, it situates their violence within conditions of structural deprivation. Scenes depicting makeshift camps, limited resources, and complaints of hunger among the bandits foreground the absence of sustainable economic alternatives. Violence is embedded within the political economy instead of being a personalised moral failure.

Ethnic tension also subtly underlies the film's socio-political critique. Although *The Herd* avoids explicit ethnic identification, it gestures toward the historical tensions surrounding pastoralist–farmer conflicts in Nigeria. These conflicts, shaped by resource scarcity and identity politics, form part of the unspoken backdrop of the narrative. The film's reception on social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), where accusations of ethnic stereotyping emerged, underscores how representations of violence often reopen unresolved national anxieties.

The film also advances socio-political critique through its portrayal of masculinity and authority. Banditry is depicted as a violent performance of failed masculinity, where dominance becomes the primary means of asserting power in contexts of marginalisation. The internal conflict among the bandits, including the killing of their former leader over unequal distribution of profits, reveals how authority is contested within exploitative hierarchies.

Gendered vulnerability further sharpens the film's critique of insecurity. Female captives experience violence differently, as seen in the sexual threat directed at Derin following her abduction. These moments expose how insecurity intensifies existing gender inequalities, placing women at heightened risk of bodily violation. In its foregrounding of gendered terror, *The Herd* situates banditry within broader structures of patriarchal power, demonstrating how violence reproduces social hierarchies rather than merely disrupting them.

Conclusion

This paper has examined *The Herd* as a significant cultural production that reconfigures Nigeria's ongoing crisis of banditry into a narrative framework for

reflection and understanding. Through its use of narrative structure, character-centred storytelling, and thematic focus on captivity and survival, the film moves beyond entertainment to engage the psychological, moral, and emotional dimensions of insecurity in Nigeria. The analysis demonstrates that *The Herd* represents banditry not merely as an isolated act of violence but as a sustained condition shaped by state absence, social vulnerability, and prolonged fear. By structuring its story around dislocation, uncertainty, and unresolved outcomes, the film foregrounds how kidnapping and captivity reshape memory, agency, and communal relations. In this sense, the film offers a measured socio-political engagement that emerges through narrative choices rather than overt political commentary. Its emphasis on silence, restrained dialogue, and unresolved endings allows the realities of insecurity to unfold through lived experience rather than didactic explanation. Overall, this study contributes to interdisciplinary discussions on Nigerian cinema by demonstrating how film can function as a site for examining insecurity through narrative form and thematic emphasis. *The Herd* thus affirms the capacity of Nigerian cinema to engage prolonged violence not only through representation but through storytelling strategies that invite reflection on survival, fear, and the persistence of trauma.

Works Cited

- Achebe, Chinua. *Anthills of the Savannah*. Heinemann, 1987.
- Barker, Jennifer M. *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*. University of California Press, 2009.
- Bruno, Giuliana. *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film*. Verso, 2002.
- Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Cornell University Press, 1978.
- Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. Revised ed., Columbia University Press, 2019.
- Diawara, Manthia. *African Cinema: Politics and Culture*. Indiana University Press, 1992.
- Effiong, Daniel Etim, director. *The Herd*. Performances by Linda Ejiofor-Suleiman and Genoveva Umeh, Netflix, 2025.
- Gabriel, Teshome H. *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation*. Africa World Press, 1982.
- Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin, Cornell University Press, 1980.

- Habila, Helon. *The Chibok Girls: The Boko Haram Kidnappings and Islamist Militancy in Nigeria*. Penguin Books, 2016.
- Herman, Judith. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. Basic Books, 1992.
- John, Elnathan. *Born on a Tuesday*. Cassava Republic Press, 2015.
- Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Duke University Press, 2019.
- Ovbiagele, Desmond, director. *The Milkmaid*. Danono Media, 2020.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. *A Grain of Wheat*. Heinemann, 1967.