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Ken Saro-Wiwa's art and the aesthetics of non-silence

George, Austin Tamuno-Opubo

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Abstract:

This work examines the writings and other discursive practices of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Nigerian dissident writer and minority rights activist, who was hanged by the military authorities in Nigeria in November 1995. Until his death, Saro-Wiwa had been a tireless campaigner against transnational oil corporations for devastating the local ecology while prospecting for oil, and against the Nigerian state for repressing oil-bearing minority communities through its nationalist bureaucratic practices. After his death, the ideas of this writer contained in over twenty literary texts and detention diaries continue to frame and inflame agitational discourses in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and beyond.

The aim of this work is to identify, interpret and critique the vast miscellany of oppositional modalities employed by Ken Saro-Wiwa and his Ogoni community in their tussles with nationalist modernity in Nigeria. Using interpretive protocols derived mainly from minority discourse theory, I attempt to examine and assess the place and significance of Ken Saro-Wiwa within the corpus of dissident culturalist discourse in Africa and beyond.