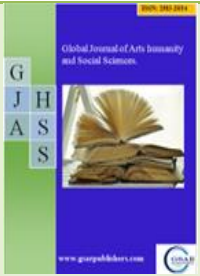
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The Ogoni Struggle: Ken Saro-Wiwa's Seeking Home at Unhomeliness

By

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the Ogoni struggle in Nigeria as a multidimensional struggle to find a “home” amidst the unhomeliness caused by environmental destruction and socio-political marginalization. This study focuses on Ken Saro-Wiwa, a notable Ogoni writer and activist whose literary and political activism aimed at ameliorating the conditions faced by his people.

This paper theoretically merges postcolonial displacement theory, Africana womanism, and Vogler’s narrative paradigm to explore Saro-Wiwa’s resistance and Ogoni struggle narratives. Through a close reading of Saro-Wiwa’s writings, the study shows how he articulated Ogoni’s longing for home as it faced displacement and environmental devastation. It further investigates Saro-Wiwa’s application of literary devices and his interaction with the notion of unhomeliness, intending to illustrate the Ogoni and the essence of unhomeliness. These results indicate that Saro-Wiwa’s writings are an important resource for exploring the complexities surrounding the Ogoni struggle and its implications for human rights and environmental justice in Nigeria.

The study concludes by reviewing Ken Saro-Wiwa’s legacy in general and his message as relevant and continuing to be echoed in present-day struggles on global issues of environmental injustice and the quest for home in the face of displacement.

Keywords: Africana Womanism, Environmental Destruction, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Literary Activism, Ogoni Struggle, Postcolonial Displacement, Resistance, Seeking Home, Unhomeliness

1. Introduction

Human rights movements typically emerge as reactions to the infringement of rights, although the nature and scope of these responses can differ significantly. One notable approach is using literary and artistic expression as a form of resistance against overwhelming repressive forces. Ken Saro-Wiwa’s advocacy for Ogoni rights in Nigeria exemplifies this complexity, incorporating a range of strategies, including militant resistance, interaction with global capitalism, political tactics, and feminist approaches, alongside the tragic circumstances surrounding his arrest and execution. As noted, such multifaceted actions often reflect oppressed peoples’ diverse methods to assert their rights and challenge systemic injustices (Moffett, 2018, pp. 457-478).

The court verdict has been excoriated by right-thinking people the world over; it was a display of evil power conjured by the unjust to put to death ones they regard as no more than insignificant microorganisms. This demonstration shows the world that it may

seek to control Wole and other writers, but they are prepared to allow any court to commit them to death.

Ken Saro-Wiwa made concerted efforts to elude death, following in the footsteps of many political prisoners throughout history. Mark Twain, for instance, sought refuge outside the United States and later attributed his newfound courage to the grief of losing his family, describing it as having made him “irresponsibly brave.” Similarly, Oscar Wilde managed to evade capture until illness took a toll on his body and mind. Amilcar Cabral, however, was not as fortunate; he was assassinated when talks with his captors broke down. Kazuo Ishiguro demonstrated resilience by choosing silence as a strategy among various creative and potent responses to oppression. The Panther 21 faced their struggles, with some managing to beat charges in court, while others, like Saalik Bilal, succumbed to terminal cancer before justice could be achieved. This pattern is reflective of a broader struggle against systemic



violence and repression, as elaborated by scholars in contemporary political discourse (Mamdani, 2012).

1.1. Background of the Ogoni People

In her critique, Tiffany Gilbert discusses how Ken Saro-Wiwa's exploration of cultural identity in **A Forest of Flowers** presents a sense of "Home" for those who are discontented or experience a sense of being "Unhomely." To fully appreciate Saro-Wiwa's contributions, it is essential to understand the context of the Ogoni people. The Ogoni, an ethnic group of approximately 750,000 individuals, reside in the Niger Delta region of southeastern Nigeria, adjacent to the Gulf of Guinea. This territory is abundant in natural resources; however, extensive oil exploration has resulted in significant environmental degradation. Oil companies have often neglected their responsibility to address the aftermath of extensive spills, leading to pervasive poverty among the locals. This neglect has contributed to a climate of heightened violence in the region. Saro-Wiwa and others have addressed the intersecting themes of environmental disaster from political and personal perspectives. Julie Iromuanya argues that Saro-Wiwa's methods of resistance illustrate the profound tensions between extractive industries and the communities they impact, particularly in the absence of negotiated agreements regarding environmental and social protections before resource extraction (Iromuanya, 2014, pp. 1-24). In Ogoni, for example, Shell commenced oil production without securing any such agreement. Furthermore, Saro-Wiwa faced exile in the early 1990s due to government repression, which indicated the mounting restrictions on dissenting voices. In 1992, he published **Genocide in Nigeria**, wherein he condemned the government's responsibility for the massacre of approximately 3,000 unarmed Ogoni individuals.

1.2. Biography of Ken Saro-Wiwa

Biography of Ken Saro-Wiwa Kenule Saro-Wiwa's public career encompasses four main areas: education, government service, journalism, and activism for minority rights. His writing talents emerged during his time at Government College, Umuahia. Saro-Wiwa began his professional journey in the Ministry of Education in Port Harcourt, but after three years, he relocated to England to pursue a career as a writer. He produced various works, including prose fiction, poetry, and scripts for television and stage. Upon returning to Nigeria in the late 1970s, he aspired to become a successful playwright. However, he transitioned to journalism in the early 1980s, serving as feature editor at the Nigerian Observer in Benin City and later as general manager of the Rivers State Newspaper Corporation. His leadership as president of the Association of Nigerian Authors from 1988 to 1993 paralleled his literary endeavors with intermittent roles in the Nigerian government. Notably, he served as provost of the University of Lagos before being appointed an Information Officer in New York in February 1976 under the Rivers State government. From 1984 to 1993, he held an executive position in the External Affairs, Petropol unit of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation. As highlighted, Saro-Wiwa's multifaceted career exemplifies his literary prowess and commitment to advocating for the rights of marginalized communities (Adedeji, 2019, pp. 211-225).

1.3. Purpose and Scope of the Study

Home places can transform insecurity into unassailable security, whether small or humble. The idea of home invites, entertains, or indulges fantasy, elicits esteem, and offers comfort. The longing for home drives people, moving them deeper into themselves and guiding their deployment of rhythmic function across the vastness of past fears and dreams. Home is motivating; it is where one learns to take root. It is kin—a totem containing blood. This abode is where, in modest dwellings and within humble means, there resides the volume of familial dreams that prepare the unconscious mind to forge insurmountable protection against the mounting onslaught of harrowing circumstances (Iromuanya, 2008, pp. 1-10).

Exile stands in stark contrast to the concept of home. It disrupts familiarity, alienates the domestic sphere, and intensifies emotional turmoil, distilling it from its fundamental elements. However, the burden of exile is profound and unquenchable. Upon one's return, it relentlessly pursues like a shadow. Exile transforms perception, giving rise to phenomena likened to what an alter ego might call "hallucinating obedience." The exiled individual resembles Cortés, who kept the hospitable Moctezuma within a circumscribed space, "hearing the rustling jungle but seeing no gardens there" (Said, 1979).

Moreover, the contemplation of what is viewed as home following his return to Ogoni after his exile and the tragedy that would befall him in the following two years serve as the driving impetus behind this thesis. When consigned to jail, interlocutor to death, one must push to linger within homeliness. The purpose is crucial. Because if differing laments easing the soul's disquiet are incessantly and earnestly composed regarding cold cells of detention and despair, phantom barbs of haunted exile, cruel seasons of inland departures, then by this prescription shall the poet compel his Muse to keep her flirtations with shades of consulship from this, his present and most secure abode.

2.1. Environmental Activism in Nigeria

Ken Saro-Wiwa spearheaded the fight for Ogoni self-determination while addressing the socio-economic and political challenges faced in the Niger Delta. The Ogoni Struggle: Ken Saro-Wiwa's Seeking Home at Unhomeliness concludes by emphasizing that these contradictory dualities contributed to a tragic dimension in his life, art, and eventual death. According to O O. Adebayo (2012), these tensions highlight the complexities of identity and belonging in postcolonial contexts (Adebayo, 2012, pp. 24-41).

In the Nigerian government's repression of political maneuverings and environmental destruction, Wiwa's personalized 'ecology of resistance' led to his being framed for murder. He was then hurriedly tried and hung on 10 November 1995. Here, he addresses a gap in Wiwa's scholarship by showing how his largely semiotic intervention in village struggles is not adequately explained by the materialist arguments excoriated by the early post-structuralists. To do this, it is necessary to tour through the very contemporary events and daunting geographic and economic circumstances faced by the Ogoni people who lost an articulate activist, novelist, poet,



journalist, and leader when the military dictator Sani Abacha had Wiwa killed, along with eight comrades, two weeks before his 54th birthday (Iromuanya, 2008, pp. 1-10).

2.2. Literary Representations of Displacement and Homelessness

Exploring home and homelessness has become increasingly prominent in contemporary world literature. Various literary contexts, such as ethnic writing, post-colonial literature, migrant literature, transnational literature, and diasporic writing, frequently articulate these states of emergence through diverse forms and expressions. Many texts often overlap multiple sensitive moral and ideological literary frameworks, leading to the classification of writers within intersecting categories. This field is rich and expansive, characterized by an immense variety that makes it challenging to encompass all these different states of emergence within a singular, broad, generic framework. As Said (1994) emphasizes, the complexities of cultural identity and displacement in literature require nuanced interpretations beyond traditional categorizations.

The Ogoni writer and activist belongs to this extraordinary group of classic authors of displaced narratives. Before his unjust execution by the Nigerian regime, he had written many pioneering novels about the Ogoni's history. The Ogoni Struggle consists of short extracts from his English prison diary, which he kept while in detention. His eloquent and highly influential statement in the courtroom might have contributed to enacting his death penalty.

3. Theoretical Framework

The argument rests on the intersection of Vogler's framework and two theoretical frameworks: postcolonial displacement theory and African womanism. First, it will explain why Vogler's narrative paradigm helps consider the methodology of Ken Saro-Wiwa's activism. Vogler argues that storytellers rely on basic narrative blueprints and that variation comes not at the broad structural level but in the "design details." Vogler's most striking example of a universal archetype is that everyone's journey gives them a "Seeker" role at some point. Vogler also suggests a series of emotional stages within the journey, each with its paradigms and guidance for dramatic conflict. Considering why a specific narrative has proven so compelling for so long, he posits that these stories activate human neurobiology, making them fundamental to how our brains store information and learn from experience.

This focus on archetypes and the pervasiveness of a nine-act structure helps consider Ken Saro-Wiwa's narratives of the Ogoni Struggle. Since 1992, Ken Saro-Wiwa has used a blueprint wary of narrative experiments. His increasing reliance on narrative cliché suggests a popular entertainment strategy to maximize communicability. Like Hollywood screenwriters, he relies on mythic structure (Hero's Journey) and schematic characterization (Doula, Donor, Temptress). This makes for prototype narrative characters with controversial and much-discussed possibilities in postcolonial displacement theory. The cyclical nature of storytelling means the essential elements of Saro-Wiwa's narrative were

continually repeated with variation. By his death, these stories had owned a social space, and his audience had come to rely on their dependability. Focusing then on Vogler's design details reveals the complexity and artistry in how Saro-Wiwa builds toward the proverbial Seeker with the Call to Adventure, Friend, Signs, Threshold Guarding, and the Belly of the Whale. This last stage involves bureaucratic capture and inevitable legal condemnation. Surprisingly, his subsequent little-told final tales consistently attempt dramatic conflict via resistance to the temporal inevitability of disenchantment, which took decades to fill the enclosure. This is evidence that if there is a mythic Ogoni Journey, Saro Wiwa knew and recited it (Iromuanya, 2008, pp. 1-10).

3.1. Postcolonial Theory

An active body of scholarship within Ecocriticism, Globalization, and Postcolonial Studies has notably enhanced postcolonialism's relevance in environmental issues. This essay's exploration of Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy** complements and expands upon existing critiques regarding the environmental backdrop of the Ogoni and the Niger Delta. It supports calls for acknowledging contexts and other cultural expressions beyond Western narrative traditions' confines. El Shreir's research highlights a "new wave" of environmental awareness that emerged in the 1960s within former colonies; however, the analysis of African environmentalism through the lens of cultural production remains relatively sparse, aside from a few isolated discussions (El Shreir, 2019). Thus, the potential for ecocritical, environmental, and bioregional theories to significantly enhance the postcolonial analytical framework when examining texts centered on environmental activists has yet to be fully explored. Particularly, how homesteading practices and attempts to colonize another's territory are viewed through a postcolonial framework across various texts from rural to urban contexts and from the Global North to South merits closer examination. Furthermore, Saro-Wiwa's portrayal of oil refinery emissions as a form of military occupation, combined with the actions of the Nigerian Federal soldiers that impose unwanted refugee status on local communities, provides critical insights derived from exile literature, especially regarding the internal conflicts that characterize emerging nation-states (El Shreir, 2019).

3.2. Ecocriticism

3.2.1. Introduction Haunting is a pivotal concept in ecocritical discourse and a fundamental idea in postcolonial criticism, particularly regarding terms such as hybridity and mimicry, which relate to the subaltern and the notorious "double bind." It is, therefore, unsurprising that ecocritics have increasingly focused on postcolonial literature, revealing a complex relationship between the two fields. This paper will examine Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy* as an aesthetic and political interpretation of Foucault's disciplinary society within the imagined and "disciplinary spaces" of both pre-independent and independent Nigeria. Furthermore, this analysis will demonstrate how *Sozaboy* is a model for subverting binaries traditionally

established by the colonial power, presenting a straightforward yet unyielding depiction of the Ogoni struggle. The conceptual challenges in ecocritical analyses of multilingual and transnational narratives become especially evident when assessing *Sozaboy's* portrayal of the Land (Owerri), an allegory of Nigeria, and an absence in the narrative's language. As noted by Bhabha (1994), "the interstitial passage between the worlds of the colonizer and the colonized creates a space of hybridity, where new cultural identities can emerge" (p. 5).

Kenule Beeson "Ken" Saro-Wiwa, the Ogoni poet-playwright-activist, was executed on November 10, 1995, with the complicity of the Nigerian government, following his rise as a globally recognized figure of resistance. In his honor, the Day of the Ogoni Martyrs is commemorated annually on June 21. Saro-Wiwa lived in Britain from 1956 to 1966, representing a minority elite who had the opportunity to study or work abroad, unlike most of his Ogoni community and other Nigerians, who faced significant disadvantages stemming from colonial and postcolonial legacies. The era of colonial exploitation has concluded, yet the legacy of the educated Africans remains complex. Notably 1970, Saro-Wiwa delivered his first in a series of ecological proclamations, firmly believing that colonization equated to ecological warfare. This concept appears increasingly relevant in contemporary neo-colonial contexts. At the beginning of the 1970s, with the onset of his writing career, Saro-Wiwa gravitated towards drama, producing 21 plays that mirrored the ethos of "little magazines" and focused on the lives of Nigerians, aimed at fostering self-confidence and addressing contemporary urban issues. His extensive body of work is encompassed within the framework of national drama (Nwankwo, 1995, pp. 45–56).

Most of his plays try to engage national nightmares and matters. It must be emphasized that his plays until the eighty-fifth decade also reveal an ambivalent relation to the oil issue. Because Saro-Wiwa holds a significant position in the oil business today, some of his colleagues accused him of hypocrisy and demagoguery.

4. Historical Context

This article examines how Ken Saro-Wiwa's Art conceives Ogoni not as the natal or biological in constructing a home but as the environment and cosmos, the violated meaning of home. Such an appropriation grants him unhomeliness and complicates his dwelling identity, thereby enabling global citizenship. On 10 November 1995, Ken Saro-Wiwa was executed by the Nigerian government; the killing by the state then drew the attention of the world to the struggle of his Ogoni people in the Niger Delta. Together with his death hanged the eight key Ogoni activists of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People—Baribor Bera, John Kpuinen, Barinem Kiobel, Daniel Gbooko, Nordu Eawo, Paul Levura, Felix Nuate, and Saturday Dobee—after what was internationally regarded as a farcical trial in the kangaroo court of the Nigerian junta. Given the multiple roots and consequences, the

affair is complex. However, one can say that fundamentally, it was his ecological movement and the oil company's desire to obfuscate the issue that got Ken Saro-Wiwa killed so drastically because his highly critical art would add voice, so the place of his writing and performing in his extensive body of work.

4.1.Colonialism and Its Impact on the Ogoni People

"The needs of Africa and Africa's people were not on the colonialists' agenda." This assertion reflects colonialism that systematically and often irreversibly undermines the cultural, social, and spiritual identities of colonized peoples, fostering what Fanon (1963) describes as a profound self-hatred within the colonized. Those assessing this view may perceive the discourse as overly focused on anti-capitalist rhetoric and political enthusiasm. However, it is essential to acknowledge that the realities of Africa and its peoples cannot be effectively understood without addressing the legacies of colonialism and, more recently, neo-colonialism. These legacies significantly influence economic, civil, historical, and social perspectives, creating a complex interplay in the context of Africa. The term "political repugnance to colonialism" serves merely as a sanitized label that obscures the actual violence—both physical and epistemological—visited upon indigenous peoples and their cultures. There is a critical need for the academic community to engage rigorously with the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism, ensuring that the discussion names those involved in the "war against culture" and "ethnic cleansing." This focused inquiry represents a necessary and deliberate intervention across multiple dimensions.

4.2.Oil Extraction in the Niger Delta

Since the adaptation of military dictatorship in Nigeria following independence in 1960, military successions have frequently disrupted the authority of democratically elected leaders. One significant consequence of prolonged military rule has been the exacerbation of political repression and human rights violations affecting the country's inhabitants. Nigeria is home to a diverse array of culturally distinct groups, each asserting its unique history and cultural significance. Since the onset of militarization in politics, tensions between various religious communities have intensified. Post-independence, the nation recognizes three official languages: English and two indigenous languages. The most widely spoken indigenous languages are Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. Nigeria's oil revenue has been crucial for its economy, but it has also precipitated a myriad of violent conflicts, particularly in the Niger Delta region. The plight of the indigenous populations in this area is intricately linked to the violence stemming from the extraction of these valuable natural resources. This chapter will explore the implications of Edward Said's theory about the writings of Nigerian authors, explicitly focusing on oil extraction and its environmental ramifications in the Niger Delta. The analysis will be exemplified through the works of Ken Saro-Wiwa, whose poetry, prose, and political activism reflect the struggles surrounding the exploration and exploitation of oil in his homeland of Ogoniland. This examination will draw upon Black Nationalist (or sometimes Black Feminist) thought, Gayatri Chakravorty

Spivak's ideas on the subaltern and world-systems literacy, and concepts from Indigenous eco-militancy. Furthermore, the notion of praxis, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of theory and practice, will be scrutinized concerning Saro-Wiwa's Africana eco-critical literary work and activism on behalf of his eco-sensitive community in Ogoniland ((D. Simon et al., 2014, pp. 383-388)).

5. Ken Saro-Wiwa's Works

Ken Saro-Wiwa's renowned novel, **Sozaboy**, is set against the backdrop of the Nigerian Civil War and is composed in Nigerian Pidgin English. "sozaboy" translates to "I am sorry, I am a civilian." The narrative follows Mene as he endeavors to become a commendable Nigerian soldier, yet the inscription on his chest leads to ridicule from those around him. Mene's journey embodies the Ogoni experience in Nigeria—characterized by marginalization, scorn, exploitation, and ultimately, death or a forced return to their ancestral homeland. The notion of "homeland" is typically associated with nationality, but such a simplistic interpretation overlooks the complexities of the Ogoni struggle. The Ogoni people, alongside the Biafrans, are born into societal disdain, obscured from Nepa, the entity that granted them independence. The novel critiques the military dictatorships that stem from colonial complicity and the ongoing exploitation of resources on their lands, which, despite being irreversibly altered, will continue to be seen as Ogoni's property. Mene's quest reflects themes of frustration, unfulfilled desire, and repression. In a broader context, this aligns with Freud's concept of "unheimlich," a feeling that arises from recalling something repulsive that one has chosen to forget, now perceived as outdated but resurfacing in a haunting manner (Freud, 1919, pp. 217–256). Saro-Wiwa's work provokes a critical examination of both the societal attitudes of obsession and the aversion towards the socio-political landscape of Nigeria.

Double jeopardy reflects a parallel quest for home, as illustrated by Aziza Bello, a Biafran woman who departs from her native land. Following her expulsion from Nigeria, she navigates between the diaspora in the United States and England for financial support and aid, gradually uncovering the profound destruction wrought by the oil industry on her community. Faulkner constructs Aziza's femininity and influences her actions through a tripartite structure, symbolizing womanhood and fertility. Transitioning from a virginal state, Aziza embodies a multigenerational identity by her thirty-third year. Freud's exploration of the uncanny stemmed from his engagement with German folklore, where the term *unheimlich* is often associated with narratives involving the double. This analysis will connect Bello's experiences in the narrative with historical realities. Consequently, a hermeneutic historiography will illuminate texts obscured by temporal distance. Nonetheless, the repression associated with *unheimlich* can be surmounted through scientific methodologies, allowing deep emotions to be rendered non-threatening. In "Unfair," the protagonist's native tongue intertwines with the nervous tension characteristic of a soldier. Like Bello, Othello also becomes a victim of his double; his foreboding transformations materialize through Iago's manipulations. Once a noble Moor of Venice, Othello devolves

into a tormented figure, reflecting the impact of Iago's deceit (Freud, 1919, pp. 217-256).

5.1.Key Themes and Motifs in Saro-Wiwa's Writing

Support for African traditions and communal individuality is a critical area of study, particularly in the context of neoliberal religious intervention and interfaith revivals. Ken Saro-Wiwa's condemnation of international corporations for their environmental destruction in Ogoni land, which ultimately led to his execution, marked a significant step in reclaiming his people's identity by dismantling colonial tribal divisions. This essay explores the realization of this communal individual destiny. Mushin's acknowledgment of his mystical heritage, which is used to restore a lost village home and remember the severed head, is intricately linked to Ken's profound writings. These writings evoke a comparable yearning for home, even within an unholy space. This is facilitated by Sarah, who serves as both the first guardian of the enormous decapitated head and the voice of an unyielding observer. A brief narrative unfolds regarding this complex journey's emergence, patterns, and ongoing nature. Ken Saro-Wiwa's literary contributions consistently challenge colonial constraints, embodying the culturally rich and religiously grounded essence of Ogoni identity while engaging in anti-colonial activism and exploring ecological and mystical themes. Sympathy naturally arises for the fertile Ogoni area and its African cosmological spirituality; the Ogoni strive to cultivate and nurture one of the earth's most productive deltas, facing derogatory labels as "primitive" due to misconceptions about their animistic beliefs. The more profound significance lies in the realization that "Ogoni" symbolizes "the proletariat of the world or the human responsibility," highlighting the numerous lives buried beneath the surface advocating for an actual realization of capitalism in the Niger Delta (Harrison, 2013).

5.2.Literary Style and Techniques

Africana Womanist homeliness represents a cosmology rooted in traditional African notions of spiritualism and existentialism unique to various African cultures. The literary techniques employed are not limited to mimetic representation but are purposefully crafted to engage and persuade the reader. This exploration delves into the effects of the Ogoni peoples' displacement and their fragmented memories, particularly in poetry, to analyze the broader implications of "home" about the political landscape and the urgent need for intervention concerning the severe conditions these communities face. As elucidated by Arndt (2021), "Seeking Home at Unhomeliness" integrates post-colonial and urban studies with a psycho-geographical lens to illuminate the Ogoni struggle through poetic expression, highlighting deliberate allusions to the loss of Ogoni land and the forced migration of its people to foreign spaces. Much of this poetry consists of protest verses addressing the environmental devastation affecting the Ogoni, leading to the communities' displacement. Notably, the adept use of language, figures, and strategic discourse sets this work apart. This study aims to deepen the understanding of poetic form by examining how the traditional

English sonnet, augmented by footnotes, can evoke a compelling impact. The deliberate juxtaposition of English conventions alongside Ogoni footnotes imbues the poetry with a foreboding and prophetic resonance, thus illuminating the significance of Ogoni heritage (Arndt, 2021, pp. 45–67).

6. Seeking Home at Unhomeliness

“Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in,” says Robert Frost. What happens if the home can no longer take you in if instead of a place, or in addition to place, or to place, home is principles, or actions on those principles (Iromuanya, 2008, pp. 1-10)? Ken Saro-Wiwa, born to the Ogoni struggle, tried and found guilty of murdering four Ogoni elders in a kangaroo court, asked for a home outside of Nigeria, possibly outside of the physical world. Long ago, Ogoni systemized an eco-ethical approach to postcolonialism: Nollywood, oil curses, leadership, technology, state government are those things one might think of inheriting a postcolonial state after hearing a single story about Africa; the idea of the indigenous should include the environment; ethnic discrimination might also mean environmental discrimination; Africans, all of them, are cosmopolitan; spirituality has never ceased in the realms of Material Being and that this realm, the material one, is not the spiritual one. To a certain degree, these are some things any Ogoni child might be taught because Ken Saro-Wiwa and other conscious Ogoni realized the necessity of inheritance in 1990 and began laying down the blankets of stories.

Ken initiated a series of impassioned letters, initially expressing anger and later escalating to fervent denunciations, regarding the discriminatory and exploitative practices of multinational oil corporations on his land. His early efforts included creating a popular sitcom that aimed to satirize the postcolonial conditions of Nigeria, which continued to grapple with the grim legacies left by colonial powers. Additionally, he established an annual celebration known as Praise the Ogoni Day on January 4, intended to uplift Ogoni spirits and honor the inception of their resistance movement. The concept of family, while rooted in the immediate context of the Ogoni community, extended to encompass The Ogoni itself—the land and earth. This blend of fiction and reality incorporated various expressions: songs dedicated to the Ogoni people, documentaries that acknowledged the exploitative practices, and critiques aimed at successive military governments. The ambivalence that the Ogoni people felt towards their leadership was also addressed, alongside videos that captured the vibrant social life during Ken Saro-Wiwa’s final days in 1995 and a critical examination of Shell Oil that navigated between comic and tragic elements. Unfortunately, the strategic use of technology was essential for these efforts; for instance, outtakes were produced to present a disingenuous apology from Saro-Wiwa after over two hours of footage were compiled. All media was stored on cassettes labeled Real and UnReal, marked in the Ogoni language, facilitating easy recognition for local villagers who lacked access to television, electricity, or any movie projection facilities. As noted by scholars, the intersection of cultural expression and

activism has been vital in the postcolonial context (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, pp. 23-45).

6.1. Interpretation of the Title

Ken Saro-Wiwa’s “Seeking Home at Unhomeliness” shuts and opens doors to varied readings of his Ogoni struggle. It configures the struggle of the Ogoni people as a communitarian seeking a home in a homeland made un home by Shell-British neo-colonialism (Tar Tsaior, 2011). Home here is a composite of the material and the spiritual, the territorial and the discursive Owu error. It embodies what Deme calls Fulaaku, the dialectical unison of beauty, ethics, truth, and justice, the bouquet of one’s life bien. It could be conceived of in what Bhabha designates as a generative, productive way: homes embody dwelling in-between (dispersed homes), ways of worlding and dwelling. It could also be seen in Heidegger’s emotive effects as a fundamental mode of human dwelling (poeticizing, protecting, nourishing, and nurturing).

Home in this doubled sense is the essential concern of Saro-Wiwa’s move of writing as giving testimony to the suffering of the Ogoni as a way of implicitly legitimating the justice of their struggle, making a radical claim to the land, and forming a home space or mapping a community of belonging, of pride in the violated land, of Ogoni national road. This home video home space (scripture as a territorial inscription) is also a genealogy of struggle and an epitaph of sacrifice (“them we glorify”). Moreover, in this sense, “Seeking Home at Unhomeliness” seeks to interiorize the flesh of our man’s message and the mission of his sacrifice.

6.2. Analysis of the Concept of Unhomeliness

Ken Saro-Wiwa’s exile is constantly foregrounded in his oeuvre as the dislocated subject, often revisiting the evanescence of his Ogoni home and the ensuing wanderings. Due to his activism, Ken Saro-Wiwa lived in exile for a substantial part of his life, eventually leading to his death under the most tragic circumstances. Exile is not merely Saro-Wiwa’s predicament since, as an Ogoni, he became a quintessential nomad left homeless by petro-violence. Oil discovery in the territory of the Ijaw in 1956 led to demographic shifts towards the Niger Delta. By the late 1970s, Shell had dominated the region, with over 90% of the oil wells being oil wells. As a “minority” ethnic group in the delta, the Ogoni acquired a newfound awareness of their marginalization and dispossession during the oil boom in the 1970s. Their awakening culminated in their demand for autonomy and local control over their resources. In this context, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People was founded in 1990 and formed the centrality of Ken Saro-Wiwa’s passion until his untimely death. At its core, Saro-Wiwa’s activism strove for a just end to exploiting his people’s natural resources. However, the Nigerian state perceived the movement as a threat to its sovereignty over natural resources and forestalled it by coiling it as barbaric tribalism. Judiciously using the media to his advantage, the state’s highly sophisticated media war spun into a violent counterinsurgency to protect “national security.” Furthermore, using the Alimentary Emergency Decree to its monstrous capabilities, the authority intended to

silence the opposition by confiscating its nourishment. Executing Saro-Wiwa along with eight other Ogoni leaders, the message acted as a deterrent to the continuing protests of the Ogoni against Shell.

7.2. Impact of the Ogoni Struggle on Human Rights in Nigeria

In November 1995, Kenule Beeson Saro-Wiwa's unsuccessful pursuit of Ogoni self-determination culminated in his execution by the Nigerian state. This event elevated his legacy to that of a martyr, framing his limited exploration of "home" and the Adua women as representative of "politicized masculinity." Alongside this potentially subversive reimagining of "home" exists his frequent portrayals of Ogoni men, who are increasingly fatigued by warfare. In this context, home signifies "the safety that emerges from familiarity, from the expectation of resistance that comes from recognition" between women, men, and their altered environments. Saro-Wiwa's continuity in these portrayals reveals the shortcomings of combatant masculinity and the rise of a collective, compassionate ethos. Despite the Ogoni struggle's significant ramifications for human rights in Nigeria, it has not garnered as much attention as similar movements in the West. A comprehensive analysis reveals its considerable impact and troubling implications. The African womanist reinterpretation of women's roles mobilized communities to combat their oppression. Collective letters opposing the violent exploitation of oil resources were composed, with notable signatures including those of Saro-Wiwa, General Sani Abacha, and the Nigerian Ambassador to the United States. Organizations such as International Pen and various human rights advocates have also championed the rights of these marginalized groups in the Niger Delta. Additionally, Saro-Wiwa's poetic expressions and methods of resistance demonstrate a commitment to the interests of his fellow African women. Saro-Wiwa's work illuminates the intersection of gender and environmental activism in the context of the Niger Delta, highlighting the need for a holistic understanding of resistance that includes both male and female perspectives (Akinwumi, 2020, pp. 87-104).

8. Legacy of Ken Saro-Wiwa

The execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa signaled the ignoble close of a life marked by an unwavering commitment to the welfare of the Ogoni (Iromuanya, 2008, pp. 1-10). Born in Bori, KSW (as he is known throughout much of his correspondence) straddled the line between the role of Ogonis most disenfranchised by the oil economy, as is the case with his origins, and figures of national authority and education. He never forgot or downplayed the position of the Ogoni within the double narrative of Nigeria's inevitable destitution and imagined prosperity, a role described in *Community Conservation and Resistance: Emergent Struggles in the Ogoni*. The articles he has contributed to the September 1994 issue of *Capital* offer a synecdochical view of concerns that had long plagued the communities of the Ogoni. As the bigger story of what was happening in Ogoni struggled to surface in Nigeria, KSW was already enmeshed in an initial State-led conflict, thus

leading to his role as National President of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People. By the time of this fatal position, he had become an interlocutor of global human rights discourse.

8.1. Influence on Contemporary Nigerian Literature

Modern literary expressions addressing the issue of exile and homecoming should be informed by these and other stories of real people trapped in other movements and places. I turn to the Nigerian author's prison letter, underlining his engagement with philosophical thought as literary and spiritual praxis. The journey from exile to a return that was the site of execution serves as a chilling counter-narrative to most narratives of successful struggles against oppressive regimes.

Though since Bavarian times, intellectuals have played pundit-professor-like surrogates for despotism, our situation has nowhere been as horrifying as here in Niger and particularly Ogoniland. These are words written while awaiting execution for complicity in the murder of four local politicians - an injustice easily connected to long and skillful opposition to the genocidal ecological destruction of his people's land. There has been extensive international attention to this case since the victims are members of the Ogoni people of southeastern Nigeria, an ethnically distinct minority population caught in a vicious colonial struggle over resource control now and into the future that links the international oil market and local environmental violence on a global scale.

8.2. Continued Relevance of Saro-Wiwa's Message

Ken Saro-Wiwa's work, particularly his critique of global capitalism and attention to voice and collective identity, continues to feel timely and instructive. There is a timeliness of the message that speaks to Kenya's present world, where the environment becomes altered beyond recognition through oil extraction, and those changes ricochet through communities and individual lives in ways that highlight power dynamics and people's sense of home and exilic desires enforced by separation, whether from landscape or tradition. Saro-Wiwa's attention to the community also provides a complex negotiation of the individuals seeking a home within and outside; women have increasingly recognized him as a forerunner of feminist ecological criticism. The revised notion of the complexities inhabiting the notion of the home offers insight into such complexity, mainly when considered in conjunction with earlier formulations of disjuncture and the experience of such as a product of failed imagination.

There is a sense, too, in which creative texts offer insights inaccessible by other means, and Saro-Wiwa has come to be seen as a key figure in offering imaginative, creative critiques. This approach has come full circle to the early declarations on behalf of the Ogoni by considering Westernized tropes. It is unsuitable for conveying a nuanced understanding of non-Western communities. Statements resonate with current negotiations of homeliness and unhomeliness, as a central paradox within claims to know and not know the other entirely shapes imagination through the ability to

relocate to a position of imagined familiarity. Saro-Wiwa's creative work in ways that alternately might embody and critique a global capital perspective further courts women's growing reclaiming of space concerning homeliness. It is concerned with articulating homeliness within a tradition and tradition as conflicting with outside powers paralleling efforts to reconfigure perspectives of globalization and capital as the informed critique of those forces.

9. Conclusion

This paper concludes with attempts to navigate the terrain of the Ogoni struggle through the double optics of Ken Saro-Wiwa, a literary and activist figure. The analysis will illustrate how Saro-Wiwa's works intricately entwine the desire for a home with the unhomeliness experienced by the Ogoni people due to environmental devastation and socio-political marginalization. The Ogoni stories that his narratives tell run the risk of being sealed permanently away in the earth by the same fire that killed the Ogoni, giving us an intersection of at once depicting the Ogoni's plight and being a fiery polemic for those who forced the Ogoni en masse into flux and destruction. Saro-Wiwa's legacy of commitment to justice and environmental preservation lives on as we grapple with today's global crisis of environmental injustice and the search for a home in an age of displacement.

This study presents the depth of the Ogoni struggle and how it updates today's struggles in and out of the context of human and environmental rights as a manifestation of Saro-Wiwa's message. Thus, it highlights the relevance of his message in the contemporary dispensation.

9.1. Implications for Future Research

This chapter holds that The Ogoni Struggle: Ken Saro-Wiwa's "Seeking Home" at Unhomeliness can be fully understood only within the context of the significant struggle for indigenous Niger Delta autonomy that it represents.

A proper understanding of that struggle requires a firmer grasp of the geopolitical dynamics of the Nigerian state and how those dynamics all too often echo its post/colonial history. In this post/colonial era, questions of what indeed constitutes an authentically 'national' or 'minority' Nigerian subjectivity are as urgent and contested throughout the Niger Delta as they are in Ogoni. Reflecting these broad deliberations, The Ogoni Struggle prompts new spaces of interpretation demarcated by the 'leaning backward.' These include asking how existing studies of Ogoni's world-making confrontation with Nigeria, prior to and after Saro-Wiwa's 1995 assassination, inform literary studies. Another impetus for this backward leaning is the use of post-colonial theory, as informed by both new historicism and Michel de Certeau's heterotopic spatial theories, to interrogate Napier's futuristic Ogoni Tetralogy that inaugurated The Ogoni Struggle (Iromuanya, 2008, pp. 1-10). Crucially, spurning the linear/progressivist assumptions often shared by these hermeneutic frameworks, this redirection reveals key continuities with cinema's apparent viscosity even as it underscores the latter's unique

aesthetic potential to engender an otherwise impossible encounter with the sensual richness of Africa's past.

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