

## VILLAGE VOICES AND GHOST COASTS: CHILD-AGENCY AND ANTHROPOCENE FRAGILITY IN NIGERIAN AND JAPANESE POETRY

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### Abstract

This study examines representations of human-made environmental disruption in contemporary Nigerian and Japanese eco-poetry through the lens of children as transnational witnesses to ecological vulnerability. While ecocritical scholarship has explored environmental justice, 'slow violence', and post-disaster literature, there has been limited comparative focus on how Nigerian and Japanese poetic traditions converge through childhood perspectives within the context of unequal histories of postcolonial extraction and technological modernity. Drawing on second-wave ecocriticism, transnational ecocriticism, and postcolonial environmental humanities, the study employs a qualitative comparative approach and close textual analysis of TanureOjaide's "Songs of Myself: Quartet" (2016) and Kozue Takeuchi's 'Do Not Forget' (2012). The analysis shows that Ojaide depicts the Niger Delta child as inhabiting ecological 'internal exile' caused by petro-capitalist extraction and postcolonial environmental injustice, while Takeuchi portrays the Japanese child-survivor facing existential rupture following the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake, tsunami, and Fukushima nuclear disaster within a technologically mediated culture of risk. Despite contrasting historical pathways, both poetic traditions frame the child-subject as a 'somatic archive' through which ecological damage is experienced bodily, emotionally, and ethically. The poems further challenge state and corporate narratives of progress by emphasising memory, sensory witness, and intergenerational vulnerability. The study concludes that the polluted Niger Delta 'Village' and the post-3/11 Japanese 'Ghost Coast' serve as interconnected, yet historically uneven, sites of Anthropocene crisis shaped by extractive capitalism, technological modernity, and environmental precariousness. By highlighting child-agency as ecological testimony, the research enriches transnational ecocriticism and postcolonial environmental humanities while deepening understanding of literature as cultural ecology and ethical resistance.

**Keywords:** Anthropocene fragility, transnational ecocriticism, postcolonial environmental humanities, child-agency, environmental justice, cultural ecology

### Introduction

The contemporary environmental crisis does not manifest as a uniform global spectacle; rather, it unfolds unevenly across specific landscapes that dictate its visibility and human toll. Discussing the Anthropocene in broad, planetary terms risks obscuring the context-specific ways ecological precarity is experienced (Buell, 1995). This study conceptualises two distinct yet interconnected sites of ecocatastrophe: the 'Village' and the 'Coast'. These are not merely geographical descriptors but symbolic ecologies where environmental degradation acquires narrative and ethical meaning within a transnational framework.

In the Nigerian context, the 'Village' represents a communal lifeworld disfigured by extractive modernity. The Niger Delta, long subjected to oil exploration, embodies what Nixon (2011) terms 'slow violence', a destruction that is attritional, dispersed, and often invisible. As observed by Okuyade (2013) and Iheka (2018), among others, the environmental crisis in African literature is inextricably linked to socio-political exploitation and the 'naturalisation' of ecological violence. In Nigerian ecocritical poems, pollution infiltrates waterways and farmlands quietly; the violence does not detonate, but rather sediments, bureaucratically normalised through the rhetoric of national development and transnational capital flows.

Conversely, the Japanese 'Coast' is defined by the 'triple disaster' of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake, tsunami, and the subsequent Fukushima nuclear meltdown. This produced a rupture of immediate, spectacular devastation, reconfiguring coastlines and rendering familiar spaces radioactive. However, attributing the differences in Nigerian and Japanese poetic responses to cultural stereotypes, suggesting the former is inherently 'loud' and the latter 'restrained', is reductive. As Buell (1995) argues, the environmental imagination is shaped by how literature represents the natural environment and its specific threats. The divergence in style arises from the nature of the trauma: the relentless, petro-capitalist exhaustion of the Delta versus the sudden, technological shock of the Tōhoku coast. 'The subdued tonal register of post-Fukushima Japanese verse may be read as a quiet resistance to state-managed resilience discourse, much as the elegiac and confrontational modes of Niger Delta ecopoetry contest the environmental violence embedded in transnational energy capitalism' (Berlant, 2011).

The Anthropocene is understood here not simply as a geological epoch marked by human impact on the planet (Crutzen, 2016), but as an ethical and political condition in which environmental harm is unevenly distributed across regions, communities, and generations. Within this framework, the child becomes an important figure through which transnational vulnerability and environmental precarity are interpreted. Rather than presenting children merely as passive victims of a 'stolen future', this study emphasises their agency and interpretive power. In these poems, children identify polluted rivers, inhabit abandoned streets, and bear witness to ecological devastation. Through their observations and presence, they reclaim narrative authority and expose the failures of political, corporate, and adult responsibility. Their perspective is therefore not symbolic decoration, but a form of witnessing consciousness that confronts environmental injustice and calls dominant structures of complicity into question (Okuyade, 2013).

Furthermore, catastrophe is not confined to landscapes or national borders; it is inscribed directly upon the human body. In the Niger Delta, exposure to oil pollution and hydrocarbons enters the bloodstream and reshapes everyday existence. In post-tsunami and post-Fukushima Japan, radiation alters bodily perception, memory, and the experience of space itself. The body therefore becomes an archive of disaster in which memory is carried somatically as well as textually. Within this context, the 'Ghost Coast' signifies not only a devastated physical landscape but also an embodied condition of displacement that echoes the poisoned interior of the Niger Delta.

TanureOjaide's poetry develops a language of protest grounded in collective grievance, locating environmental destruction within longer histories of exploitation and corporate extraction. By contrast, Kozue Takeuchi's post-2011 poetry often employs silence, restraint, and ambiguity to approach forms of loss that resist immediate resolution. These differing aesthetic strategies should not be understood as oppositional. Rather, they represent parallel literary responses to fragility, ecological uncertainty, and the pressures of the global energy

economy. In both cases, the child functions as a critical figure through whom loss is recognised, remembered, and resisted, while continuity is asserted amid systemic collapse.

This study adopts a transnational comparative framework informed by Aguru's (2011, 2025) comparative scholarship on Nigerian and Japanese theatre traditions, alongside Dawodu's (2022) ecocritical analysis of Nigerian and Japanese literary representations of environmental catastrophe. Collectively, these studies establish a methodological precedent for examining how geographically and historically distinct traditions respond to convergent experiences of vulnerability, memory, and socio-political disruption. By reading these poetic and cultural contexts dialogically, the analysis situates localised ecological crises within wider global structures of technological risk, environmental injustice, and extractive capitalism. In doing so, it moves beyond identity-based or nationally bounded interpretations to foreground the shared material conditions of displacement, precarity, and marginalisation produced by transnational regimes of power and capital.

Methodologically, the study is grounded in Lawrence Buell's (2009) 'second-wave' ecocriticism, which prioritises environmental justice and emphasises the interdependence of ecological degradation and socio-political systems (Slovic et al., 2019). Through close textual analysis of TanureOjaide's 'Skies Without Birds' from *Songs of Myself: Quartet* (2016) and Kozue Takeuchi's 'Do Not Forget' (2012), the study demonstrates that poetic form reconfigures vulnerability as an ethical demand for recognition, witness, and responsibility. Read in comparative perspective, these texts reveal how distinct histories of ecological catastrophe converge around shared concerns with survival, memory, and futurity. Emerging from both the Niger Delta village and the post-disaster Japanese coast, the child's voice destabilises narratives of inevitability and invites renewed critical attention to a fractured yet interconnected planetary condition.

### **Literature Review: Transnational Ecocriticism and the Anthropocene**

The intersection of environmental humanities and literary criticism has undergone a profound paradigmatic shift over the last three decades, transitioning from a localised preoccupation with nature writing to a globally orientated interrogation of ecocatastrophe (Dawodu, 2022), systemic precarity, and environmental injustice. Early ecocritical discourse, often termed 'first-wave', frequently privileged a green-world pastoralism, focusing on the aesthetic recuperation of the non-human wilderness (Garrard, 2023). However, as ecological crises intensified and their entanglement with global capital became undeniable, a theoretical recalibration emerged. This shift, codified as 'second-wave' ecocriticism, redirects the analytical gaze toward the socio-political dimensions of environmental degradation. As Buell (1995) posits, the environmental imagination is a civic requirement; contemporary scholars extend this by integrating urban-industrial ecologies into the critical framework and foregrounding the uneven distribution of harm.

This transition is essential for an analysis of the Nigerian and Japanese contexts, where ecological devastation is inextricably linked to the legacies of extractive capitalism, technological modernity, and transnational histories of trauma. By moving beyond the 'nature-culture' binary, second-wave ecocriticism facilitates a rigorous examination of how literary texts negotiate the 'slow violence' (Nixon, 2011) of the Anthropocene, which is a geological epoch where human agency has become a dominant planetary force, yet one whose impacts are asymmetrically distributed across geopolitical and generational divides. Recent scholarship by Iheka (2021) and Okuyade (2013) emphasises that in the Global South, particularly the Niger Delta, environmental representation is a site of resistance against transnational and multinational exploitation of the local resources. These African literary engagements transcend mere mimetic recording of decline; instead, they function as

subversive interventions into the global structures of power that facilitate environmental violence.

In the Niger Delta, this violence manifests as a protracted, cumulative attrition that occurs across time and space, often eluding the 'spectacular' requirements of global media cycles. Nixon's (2011) framework remains salient for interpreting the eco-poetry of the region, where the environmental damage inflicted by multinational corporations has reconfigured the physical and ontological parameters of communal life. In this context, the 'Village' is not merely a setting but a symbolic nexus of ancestral belonging and subsistence practices under siege by the transnational logic of petro-capitalism. Poets such as TanureOjaide have developed what may be termed a 'painful idiom' (Iheka, 2018), a rhetorical strategy that confronts the invisibility of slow violence through direct, often accusatory language. This poetics of indictment resists the abstractions of global environmental discourse, insisting instead on localised accountability and the visibility of the marginalised subject within the global energy grid. By mapping the contamination of air, soil, and water, this body of work transforms the poem into a somatic archive of a community's struggle against extractive modernity.

While Nigerian ecocriticism often adopts a tone of overt protest, scholarship emerging from Japan in the wake of the 2011 'Triple Disaster', the Tōhoku earthquake, tsunami, and Fukushima nuclear meltdown, frequently explores more nuanced tonal registers. Thornber (2012) introduces the concept of 'ecoambiguity' to articulate the complex, often ambivalent relationship between humans and their environments in East Asian literature. Ecoambiguity characterises the pervasive sense of ethical entanglement and 'vague helplessness' that arises when the boundaries between human error and natural catastrophe become blurred by technological failure. In the aftermath of 3/11, Japanese eco-poetry often depicts the 'Coast' as a spectral, liminal topography, emptied of its former vitality and rendered precarious by invisible radiation. Rather than the direct polemics found in the Niger Delta, these texts frequently employ silence, fragmentation, and tonal restraint. As studies by Rosenbaum (2014) suggest, this aesthetic choice represents a culturally inflected mode of witnessing that acknowledges the trauma of an environment rendered 'unhomely' by a failure of international nuclear safety standards.

Despite these divergent rhetorical strategies, the figure of the child emerges as a significant point of transnational convergence. Goga et al. (2018) argue that children's environmental literature performs a unique cultural function by positioning the child-subject as a uniquely perceptive witness. They conceptualise the child's body as a 'somatic archive', a physical register of ecological health or decline. In the Anthropocene, this liminality is intensified by 'Anthropocene fragility'. Although Crutzen (2016) defined the epoch by human geological agency, this agency is not universally shared. Children inherit the consequences of environmental decisions and transnational industrial policies in which they had no part. By foregrounding the child, poets such as Ojaide and Kozue Takeuchi expose the inherent intergenerational injustice of the current epoch. The child becomes a 'sentinel figure', a diagnostic presence that alerts the reader to the ethical stakes of environmental neglect by embodying the direct, physical consequences of systemic failure.

The transnational dimension of this study is grounded in Aguoru's (2011, 2025) comparative scholarship on Nigerian and Japanese theatre traditions, alongside Dawodu's (2022) ecocritical analysis of Nigerian and Japanese literary representations of environmental catastrophe. Aguoru's studies of national theatrical forms, particularly the Bunraku and Kwagh-hir puppet traditions, demonstrate how cultural expressions preserve collective identity while simultaneously reflecting broader social, political, and historical realities

across geographically distant societies. Her work challenges narrowly national literary frameworks by foregrounding the dialogic and transnational character of artistic production. Complementing this perspective, Dawodu (2022) examines how Nigerian and Japanese literary texts increasingly move beyond the romanticisation of nature towards representations of ecological collapse, displacement, and environmental precarity.

Building on these interventions, the present study employs a transnational ecocritical framework informed by the notion of shared vulnerability within the Anthropocene. Rather than reproducing rigid binaries between the Global North and Global South, the analysis traces convergences between the Niger Delta and Tōhoku as regions shaped by interconnected systems of ecological risk, technological disaster, and economic exploitation. The Niger Delta's history of oil extraction and Tōhoku's seismic and nuclear trauma are therefore interpreted as distinct yet related manifestations of global environmental precarity. Within this comparative framework, Ojaide and Takeuchi emerge as poets of ecological testimony whose differing aesthetic strategies converge in their ethical engagement with environmental devastation, memory, and displacement.

Finally, Zapf's (2016, 2024) conception of literature as a form of 'cultural ecology' provides an important theoretical dimension for this study. Zapf argues that literary texts operate as dynamic cultural systems capable of mediating between ecological destruction and the regenerative possibilities of human imagination. Within this framework, the poetry of Ojaide and Takeuchi functions not only as a record of environmental catastrophe but also as a mode of ethical and imaginative intervention. Ojaide's evocation of skies emptied of birds and Takeuchi's representation of abandoned coastal landscapes participate in what may be understood as the cultural archiving of ecological loss and collective trauma. Yet these texts extend beyond acts of mourning. By positioning the child at the centre of ecological experience, both poets create imaginative spaces through which vulnerability, memory, and futurity are critically re-evaluated. The child therefore emerges as a temporal and ethical figure through whom possibilities of continuity and resistance are articulated against narratives of irreversible collapse.

Existing scholarship nevertheless reveals a significant gap at the intersection of postcolonial ecocriticism, East Asian environmental humanities, and childhood studies. Although concepts such as Nixon's (2011) 'slow violence' and Thornber's (2012) 'ecoambiguity' are well established, limited attention has been given to sustained transnational comparisons between Nigerian and Japanese environmental literature through the specific analytical lens of childhood. This study addresses that gap by demonstrating how distinct poetic traditions converge around the child's perspective as a site of ecological witness, agency, and ethical response within an interconnected but environmentally fragile world.

### Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative comparative methodology grounded in transnational ecocriticism and informed by the principles of 'second-wave' ecocriticism. Building on Buell's (2009) distinction between earlier wilderness-centred ecocriticism and later environmentally justice-oriented approaches, the study examines ecological degradation as inseparable from social, political, and economic structures. In this context, the 'environment' is understood not only as natural landscape but also as inhabited and industrialised space, including the rural village, the polluted Delta, and the devastated coastline (Slovic et al., 2019). This framework enables an analysis of the village and the coast as symbolic ecologies through which localised trauma intersects with broader forms of planetary precarity.

The study employs purposive textual selection, focusing on Tanure Ojaide's 'Skies Without Birds' from *Songs of Myself: Quartet* (2016) and Kozue Takeuchi's 'Do Not Forget'. These

poems were selected because they represent distinct yet interconnected forms of Anthropocene catastrophe: the prolonged extractive violence of oil exploitation in the Niger Delta and the technological and seismic devastation associated with the 2011 Tōhoku disaster. The comparison therefore facilitates an examination of both gradual environmental attrition and sudden ecological rupture within what Buell (1995, 2009) describes as the ‘environmental imagination’.

Methodologically, the analysis proceeds through close textual reading, transnational comparison, and ecocritical synthesis. First, the poems are examined for recurring motifs of child-agency, ecological vulnerability, memory, displacement, and bodily fragility. Nixon’s (2011) concept of ‘slow violence’ and Thornber’s (2012) theory of ‘ecoambiguity’ provide interpretive tools for analysing the differing rhetorical strategies of protest, silence, grief, and ethical witnessing within the texts. Second, drawing on Aguoru’s (2011, 2025) comparative framework, the study situates the poems within a transnational dialogue that moves beyond narrowly national literary categories. Finally, Zapf’s (2016) concept of ‘cultural ecology’ is employed to evaluate how poetry functions both as an archive of ecological loss and as a medium for ethical reflection and imaginative resistance. Through this interdisciplinary approach, the study examines how the child-subject becomes a critical site of ecological testimony within an interconnected yet fragile planetary condition.

### **Findings and Analysis: Anthropogenic Rupture and the Child-Subject in Ojaide’s Poetry**

TanureOjaide’s poetry constitutes a sustained literary engagement with the ecological devastation of the Niger Delta and its consequences for communal life, memory, and futurity. In *Songs of Myself: Quartet* (2016), particularly the section ‘Skies Without Birds’, Ojaide deploys a poetic idiom shaped by repetition, oral cadence, lamentation, and direct accusation to expose the cumulative violence of petro-capitalism. His poetic strategy aligns with what Nixon (2011) conceptualises as ‘slow violence’, a form of environmental destruction that unfolds gradually, often outside the spectacular visibility demanded by global media discourse. Rather than representing catastrophe as a singular event, Ojaide presents ecological collapse as a prolonged condition embedded within everyday existence. Within this framework, the child emerges not merely as a symbolic victim of environmental degradation, but as a crucial witnessing consciousness through whom the scale of ecological rupture becomes ethically legible.

In ‘Skies Without Birds’, the disappearance of birds functions as both ecological evidence and cultural metaphor. Birds conventionally signify continuity, seasonal renewal, freedom, and the spiritual vitality of place. Their absence therefore signals not only biodiversity loss but also the erosion of the communal rhythms that once structured Deltaic life. Ojaide (2016) observes that children now possess no ‘kites to coast along the skyline’ (p. 31). The image is deceptively simple yet deeply evocative. The kite traditionally symbolises imaginative freedom, aspiration, and childhood play. However, the inability to ‘coast along the skyline’ suggests that the environmental conditions necessary for such freedom have been fundamentally compromised. The skyline itself has been transformed by industrial intrusion, where ‘smoke-stacks of the refinery’ dominate the visual and atmospheric landscape (Ojaide, 2016, p. 31). Through this juxtaposition, the poem constructs a contrast between remembered ecological vitality and contemporary desolation.

Ojaide further represents environmental catastrophe through embodied imagery that foregrounds the material consequences of pollution on everyday life. Rivers are no longer sources of sustenance or cultural continuity but spaces contaminated by extraction and waste. The landscape inhabited by the child-subject is characterised by poisoned waters, toxic air,

and declining agricultural productivity. Ojaide (2016) depicts a world in which the ‘farmland yields sickness rather than sustenance’ (p. 31), reversing the traditional association between land and nourishment. Such imagery situates ecological devastation within the intimate sphere of bodily existence. The child’s body becomes a site upon which environmental violence is materially inscribed, reflecting Iheka’s (2018) argument that African eco-literature frequently exposes the entanglement of political exploitation and ecological destruction.

Sound also performs an important rhetorical function in the poem. Ojaide repeatedly invokes industrial noise to disrupt the organic rhythms associated with village life. Children endure ‘cough-ridden nights punctuated by the hiss of gas flares’ (Ojaide, 2016, p. 31). The onomatopoeic ‘hiss’ reproduces the intrusive presence of industrial machinery within the poetic form itself, transforming environmental contamination into an auditory experience. This sonic disruption reinforces the sense that petro-industrial capitalism has invaded not only the landscape but also the sensory and psychological life of the community. The child’s experience of sleeplessness, illness, and fear demonstrates how ecological violence extends beyond physical degradation into the realm of affect and consciousness.

Importantly, Ojaide positions the child as an ethical witness whose perspective destabilises official narratives of national development and economic progress. While state and corporate actors frequently justify oil extraction through the rhetoric of revenue generation and modernisation, the child perceives only loss, contamination, and dispossession. The repeated absence of birds, clean rivers, fertile land, and breathable air produces what may be understood as a form of internal exile. Although the child remains geographically within the homeland, the environment itself has become estranged and uninhabitable. This condition reflects a broader Anthropocene precarity in which communities are displaced not only through migration but through the destruction of the ecological systems that sustain belonging.

Ojaide’s poetry also suggests that environmental degradation constitutes an assault upon cultural memory. In Deltaic cosmology, rivers, forests, and farmlands function as repositories of communal history and identity. Their destruction therefore, erodes the mechanisms through which cultural knowledge is transmitted across generations. The child inherits what Ojaide (2016) describes as a ‘broken text’ (p. 32), a fragmented ecological archive marked by absence and contamination. Yet the child’s act of naming what has disappeared becomes a form of resistance. By bearing witness to vanished birds, polluted rivers, and toxic skies, the child-subject performs an act of counter-memory that challenges the official cartographies of oil extraction and developmental progress.

### **Ghost Coasts’, Existential Rupture, and the Child-Subject in Post-3/11 Japanese Poetry**

Where the ecological crisis of the Niger Delta unfolds through the prolonged temporality of petro-capitalist extraction, the catastrophe represented in post-3/11 Japanese poetry emerges through abrupt rupture and ontological dislocation. The Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami, and subsequent Fukushima nuclear disaster of 2011 transformed the Tōhoku coastline into what may be understood as a ‘Ghost Coast’, a landscape marked simultaneously by physical devastation, radioactive contamination, displacement, and cultural trauma. Unlike the cumulative degradation characteristic of the Niger Delta, the Japanese catastrophe was immediate and spectacular, producing a sudden collapse of spatial, temporal, and existential stability. Yet despite these differences in tempo and causality, both poetic traditions converge in their representation of ecological precarity as lived through the embodied experience of the child-subject.

In Kozue Takeuchi's 'Do Not Forget' (2012), the child-survivor occupies the centre of the poetic consciousness. Written from the perspective of a fourteen-year-old witness to the tsunami and its aftermath, the poem resists abstraction and instead foregrounds immediate bodily and sensory perception. The poem's language is marked by formal restraint, emotional directness, and linguistic economy. Rather than relying upon elaborate symbolism or philosophical reflection, Takeuchi constructs catastrophe through concrete sensory fragments that reproduce the disorientation of survival itself. This stylistic choice distinguishes the poem from adult-centred literary representations of disaster that often mediate trauma through aesthetic distance or retrospective interpretation (Roripaugh, 2019). In Takeuchi's poem, catastrophe is not interpreted after the fact; it is experienced somatically and recorded in real time.

One of the poem's most striking images is the description of the sea 'swallowing the town' (Takeuchi, 2012, p. 18). The verb 'swallowing' transforms the tsunami into a devouring, animate force that erases the distinction between natural phenomenon and predatory violence. The town does not merely disappear beneath water; it is consumed. This linguistic choice intensifies the helplessness of the human subject and underscores the fragility of built environments before overwhelming ecological force. Unlike the slow contamination of rivers and farmlands in Ojaide's poetry, where degradation accumulates gradually, Takeuchi's coastline undergoes instantaneous obliteration. Homes, roads, schools, and communal landmarks vanish within moments, producing what may be described as existential discontinuity.

The poem repeatedly returns to questions of scale and vulnerability. Takeuchi's self-description as 'still small' (2012, p. 18) carries significance beyond the literal acknowledgement of childhood. The phrase emphasises the disproportion between the fragile human body and the immense destructive force of the tsunami. It also functions structurally within the poem by interrupting descriptions of devastation with an assertion of embodied limitation. In this context, childhood becomes not simply a demographic category but a phenomenological condition through which catastrophe is apprehended. The child's body registers danger before ideological or political frameworks can interpret it. The disaster is therefore experienced through smell, sound, touch, and fear rather than through abstract discourse.

This somatic emphasis becomes especially evident in Takeuchi's recollection of the 'smell of mud and salt' (2012, p. 19). The image is important precisely because of its lack of metaphorical embellishment. The sensory detail anchors the poem within the material realities of the debris field, resisting any romanticisation of suffering. Mud and salt signify the violent intermingling of land and sea, home and ruin, memory and contamination. In contrast to idealised representations of the Japanese coastline as a site of natural beauty or cultural nostalgia, the coast becomes a space of decomposition and displacement. The child-survivor inhabits an environment transformed into what Thornber (2012) describes as a condition of 'ecoambiguity', where the same landscape functions simultaneously as homeland and source of existential threat.

The notion of the 'Ghost Coast' therefore extends beyond physical destruction to encompass temporal and psychological rupture. Before 3/11, the coastline represented *furusato*, the affective notion of hometown identity deeply embedded within Japanese cultural memory. After the disaster, however, the same landscape becomes spectral, populated by debris, absence, and invisible radiation. The coastline is no longer stable ground upon which personal and communal continuity can be imagined. Instead, it becomes an unstable zone where past and future have been radically disrupted. As Nakamura (2015) argues, the child-

survivor becomes an 'inheritor of ruin', compelled to negotiate meaning within a world whose symbolic and material structures have collapsed.

Takeuchi's fragmented poetic structure formally reproduces this condition of instability. The poem does not unfold through linear narrative progression but through disjointed recollections, sensory fragments, and emotionally compressed observations. This fragmentation mirrors the shattered geography of the coast itself. Twisted metal, broken homes, scattered clothing, and contaminated water become the dominant visual vocabulary of the post-disaster environment. Meaning is no longer coherent or continuous; it must be reconstructed from remnants. In this sense, the poem functions as a textual equivalent of the debris field it describes.

The imperative embedded in the poem's title, 'Do Not Forget', constitutes its most significant ethical intervention. The command operates simultaneously as memorial injunction and political resistance. In the aftermath of national catastrophe, public discourse often seeks recovery through narratives of resilience, reconstruction, and return to normalcy. Takeuchi's poem resists this pressure toward closure by insisting upon the persistence of memory. Her plea that readers 'Do Not Forget' the 'unbelievable situation' (2012, p. 18) transforms remembrance into an ethical obligation. The child-speaker assumes the role of what Buell (1995) describes as the ecological sentinel, preserving awareness against cultural amnesia and political sanitisation.

Importantly, the poem's authority derives precisely from the vulnerability of its speaker. The child does not speak from institutional authority or ideological certainty but from embodied exposure to disaster. This vulnerability produces a form of ethical credibility that challenges official narratives of technological safety and national recovery. The child's testimony reveals the inadequacy of technocratic assurances in the face of ecological catastrophe. Nuclear contamination, unlike visible debris, introduces a further layer of spectral anxiety because radiation remains largely imperceptible yet materially dangerous. Thus, the 'Ghost Coast' is haunted not only by physical absence but also by invisible toxicity.

### Convergences and Divergences

When read transnationally alongside Ojaide's *Songs of Myself: Quartet* (2016), significant convergences emerge despite the differing historical and ecological conditions of the Niger Delta and Tōhoku. Ojaide's poetry articulates environmental catastrophe through the prolonged violence of extraction, while Takeuchi records the sudden rupture of seismic and nuclear disaster. Yet both poetic traditions foreground the child as the figure through whom ecological fragility becomes most visible. In Ojaide, the child inhabits a poisoned village marked by oil slicks, gas flares, and disappearing wildlife. In Takeuchi, the child inhabits a devastated coastline marked by debris, radiation, and displacement. In both cases, the environment ceases to function as a stable foundation for belonging and development.

This convergence is especially evident in the treatment of the home. For Ojaide, home persists geographically yet becomes ecologically estranged through chronic contamination. For Takeuchi, home is abruptly erased and rendered uninhabitable through disaster and radiation. The child in both poetic traditions experiences what may be termed ontological displacement. They remain within the national territory yet become effectively 'unhomed' within it. The 'birdless sky' in Ojaide (2016, p. 31) and the 'swallowed town' in Takeuchi (2012, p. 18) therefore function as parallel metaphors of environmental and existential dispossession.

The application of transnational frameworks allows these geographically distant catastrophes to be read dialogically rather than hierarchically. The Niger Delta and Tōhoku are not treated

as interchangeable sites of suffering, nor are their histories collapsed into a universal narrative of disaster. Rather, they are understood as distinct manifestations of Anthropocene precarity shaped by interconnected systems of technological modernity, extractive capitalism, and ecological instability.

Zapf's (2016) conception of literature as 'cultural ecology' further illuminates how these poems function beyond mere documentation of loss. Both Ojaide and Takeuchi utilise the child-subject as a repository of endangered meanings and threatened futures. Through acts of witnessing, naming, and remembering, the child preserves forms of ecological memory that industrial modernity threatens to erase. The child's testimony becomes an archive against forgetting, ensuring that ecological catastrophe remains ethically and historically legible.

Ultimately, the convergence between the Niger Delta 'Village' and the Japanese 'Ghost Coast' reveals that the Anthropocene produces not only environmental destruction but also profound crises of belonging, continuity, and futurity. Although the forms of violence differ in tempo and manifestation, both poetic traditions demonstrate how ecological catastrophe destabilises the relationship between human beings and the environments that sustain identity, memory, and communal life. Through the child's voice, these poems transform vulnerability into ethical witness and compel renewed reflection on the fragile conditions of planetary existence.

### Conclusion

This study has argued that ecocatastrophe exceeds infrastructural damage; it constitutes a fundamental disturbance of interior life that resonates across a transnational landscape. While metrics quantify parts-per-million of hydrocarbons or seismic magnitude, they cannot render the subjective experience of inhabiting a poisoned creek or a haunted shoreline. Literature provides a human-centred epistemology of disaster, attentive to affect, memory, and embodied perception, thereby bridging the gap between local trauma and global systemic failure.

The child-subject emerges as the most acute signifier of Anthropocene fragility, crystallising anxieties about intergenerational justice and transnational risk (Goga et al., 2018). Whether the displacement is the result of chronic extraction in the Niger Delta or acute rupture on the Tōhoku coast, the child is positioned at the threshold between inherited memory and an uncertain existence. Ultimately, the agency identified in these poems resides in the act of witness. When a child-speaker evokes vanished birds in Ojaide's verse or records the 'smell of mud and salt' in Takeuchi's (2012, p. 19), that utterance constitutes an act of resistance against erasure. By centring the interior life of displaced children, Ojaide and Takeuchi transform diffuse anxiety into articulated testimony that transcends national boundaries. Their work ensures that the fragile present is inscribed within a durable transnational archive of survival. This archive challenges both state negligence and the narratives of inevitability that dominate the Anthropocene epoch, asserting that the child's voice is a vital moral compass in an age of planetary crisis.

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