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Hydrocolonial currents: Water, migration, and climate allegory in Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island*

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ABSTRACT

This article reads Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* through Elizabeth DeLoughrey's hydrocolonial framework to argue that the novel reorients climate fiction from humanitarian spectacle to the ethics of passages. Treating water as both archive and infrastructure, this article traces an itinerary, deltaic edges in Bengal, littoral transits at sea, and lagoonal arrivals in Venice, showing how colonial sea lanes, port bureaucracies, and contemporary rescue regimes sediment into present mobilities. Allegory, here, is not evasive; it scales the Anthropocene through thick, local hydrohistories: Cyclone memory and salinization in the Sundarbans, vessel checkpoints and registries across the Mediterranean, and MOSE's flood barriers as technopolitical palimpsest. Bringing DeLoughrey into dialogue with wet ontologies (Steinberg & Peters), tidalectics (via Ritson), slow violence (Nixon), and wake work (Sharpe), this paper models a teachable "Hydrocolonial Itinerary" method for literary analysis. It reframes care from rescuing bodies to safeguarding passages as commons, aligning blue urbanism with postcolonial oceanic ethics. Attending migrant narratives, cetacean signals, and digitized maritime surveillance, this paper shows how *Gun Island* reworks mobility from crisis-event to relational maintenance across waters, infrastructures, and species, suggesting a pedagogy that couples close reading with cartographic, archival, and policy literacies. This supports classroom and community-engaged blue humanities research today.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature by theorizing hydrocolonial allegory in Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* through a Hydrocolonial Itinerary Method. It investigates Bengal–Mediterranean–Venice water routes as infrastructures. The study documents that water functions as an archive, a border, and a site of ethics.

1. INTRODUCTION

A bell rings during a cyclone, and a shrine yields fresh water; later, sirens in Venice announce the closing of floodgates that keep the city open by holding the sea at bay. Between those two signals, one in the Bengal delta, one in a European lagoon, Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* (2019) stages a paradox central to contemporary climate fiction: infrastructures designed for care also ration movement, and the places that protect life do so by scripting passage. This study argues that Ghosh composes such scenes not as atmospheric detail but as the very medium of narrative. Across delta, open sea, and lagoon, water becomes both archive and infrastructure, a hydro-history that carries the empire's lanes, registries, and valves into the present (DeLoughrey, 2017; Ghosh, 2019). Across the Indian Ocean and into the Mediterranean, sea crossings are often framed as sudden emergencies, a rhetoric that flattens histories into

eventfulness and obscures slower, antecedent pressures (Chakrabarty, 2009; Nixon, 2011). *Gun Island* resists that frame by composing a route from the Bengal delta to Venice in which water does not simply surround the story; it structures it as a medium and memory (Ghosh, 2019). Deltas, shipping lanes, and lagoons appear as infrastructures that remember trade, extraction, and coercion, so that contemporary movement reads as recurrence rather than rupture, a reading consistent with hydro-historical accounts of the sea as archive (DeLoughrey, 2017).

Within literary studies, the ocean has evolved from a backdrop to an analytic medium through the concept of the "blue humanities," which urges attention to maritime space as a connective tissue, fluid, historical, and rich with labor and risk (Blum, 2010; Mentz, 2009). Work on "wet ontologies" extends that shift by showing how governance and mobility take distinct forms at sea and along coasts, where rules, surveillance, and rescue are performed in time as much as in space (Steinberg & Peters, 2015). Reading against this scholarship, *Gun Island* hinges less on generic "nature" than on water-borne infrastructures whose colonial designs continue to pattern present routes, an emphasis legible through hydrocolonial approaches that track imperial systems across coasts, corridors, and ports (DeLoughrey, 2017; Hofmeyr, 2019).

Current criticism has mapped important parts of the novel's terrain: climate-displacement narration, multispecies entanglements at sea, and Venice as a figure of modern precarity (Gilson, 2022; Hoydis, 2024; Khan, 2024). Other readings follow the Bonduki Sādhāgar–Manasā cycle to demonstrate how myth functions as practical knowledge for navigating uncertain waters (Samkaria, 2022; Yadav, 2022). These interventions establish ethical and formal stakes, yet the novel's waterworld has rarely been treated as infrastructure with a colonial genealogy, ports, corridors, quarantine logics, and permissions that endure beyond formal decolonization (DeLoughrey, 2017; Hofmeyr, 2019). This article addresses that gap by reading *Gun Island* as a hydrocolonial itinerary in which coastlines and sea passages function as historical devices for migration rather than mere settings (Mentz, 2009; Steinberg & Peters, 2015).

The thesis is that the Bengal delta, the open sea, and the Venetian lagoon are configured as a three-part hydro-archive of empire: a deltaic edge where river meets tide and legend; a littoral transit where registries, patrol windows, and rescue protocols regulate movement; and a lagoonal arrival where gates and permits compress water into technopolitics (DeLoughrey, 2017; Ghosh, 2019). Allegory in this account is not evasive but a scale mechanism that binds past routes to present crossings, making inherited infrastructures perceptible as they reappear under climate pressure (DeLoughrey, 2017). The ethical consequence is a pivot from episodic rescue to the design and maintenance of passage channels, checkpoints, and barriers understood as a commons that must be governed for access and repair rather than as space between lands (Price, 2017; Sharpe, 2016).

The analysis examines how *Gun Island* depicts coastlines as colonial infrastructures that persist into the present, particularly at the delta where departure is both imagined and compelled; how allegory utilizes oceanic routes so that legend and memory function as logistical knowledge rather than mere decorative lore; and how Venice's lagoon, with engineered gates and layered jurisdictions, redefines "arrival" as a technopolitical afterlife of empire rather than an endpoint (DeLoughrey, 2017; Steinberg & Peters, 2015). Methodologically, the article adopts a single-theorist, single-text approach in which DeLoughrey's hydrocolonialism anchors interpretation, while related work provides medium-specific vocabulary without multiplying lenses (DeLoughrey, 2017; Samuelson & Lavery, 2019). The reading proceeds through an itinerary, Edges → Transits → Arrivals, tracked by concrete cues such as toponyms, jetties, ferry chits, manifests, inspections, rescue timing windows, floodgates, and permit windows (Ghosh, 2019; Steinberg & Peters, 2015).

Because Venice composes the novel's final movement, lagoon scenes are briefly situated within current scientific and policy discourse to calibrate the literary claim: attribution studies link extreme *acqua alta* to a warming climate while showing that timely MOSE operations reduce peak floods; at the same time, repeated closures raise questions about lagoon–sea exchanges and peripheral marsh ecologies (Faranda, Messori, & Vannitsem, 2023; Tognin, Molinaroli, Guerzoni, & Sarretta, 2021). The barriers' logic of selective permeability has been read as a politics of the valve rather than the wall, a maritime grammar consistent with ports and quarantine (Leonardi, 2021). A blue-

urbanism perspective clarifies the ethical stakes of such engineering in everyday life, emphasizing public access to waterborne mobility and equitable distribution of adaptation's burdens (Beatley, 2014). These contexts remain illustrative rather than determinative, returning the argument to scenes where sirens sound, raised walkways channel foot traffic, and small craft are rerouted at inlets (Ghosh, 2019; Leonardi, 2021).

The payoff is twofold. Formally, centering water as archive and infrastructure demonstrates how *Gun Island* transforms the sea from a mere backdrop into a narrative engine, aligning the plot with the material regularities of lanes, registries, and gates (DeLoughrey, 2017; Mentz, 2009). Ethically, reframing movement as passage through inherited systems shifts emphasis from singular crises to route design and maintenance, an outlook consonant with accounts of historical afterlives and with arguments for conceiving the sea as a contested commons (Price, 2017; Sharpe, 2016). The article proceeds by situating the field and gap, defining the hydrocolonial protocol, and offering close readings at the delta, at sea, and in the lagoon before returning to allegory's scale work and a classroom tool for teaching hydrocolonial itineraries (Blum, 2010; DeLoughrey, 2017).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Amitav Ghosh's fiction repeatedly returns to coasts and river deltas as pressure points where history, labor, and weather accumulate into narrative form, and *Gun Island* extends this coastal imagination by carrying deltaic memory outward into transoceanic routes and a European lagoon city (Ghosh, 2019). The shore remains a point of departure, but the novel's narrative weight shifts toward maritime circuits and the bureaucratic architectures that regulate movement, making questions of passage, delay, and entry as decisive as landscape description. This shift has encouraged criticism that treats the sea not as a scenic surround but as a medium through which connection and control are organized (DeLoughrey, 2017; Mentz, 2009).

Recent scholarship has begun to clarify what *Gun Island* is doing with this watery scale. One strand interprets the novel as a climate-displacement narrative that updates the travel form for an era characterized by visas and crossings, illustrating how storytelling mediates the emotional burdens associated with departure and arrival (Hoydis, 2024). Another emphasizes the novel's nonhuman presences animals, weather, and pathogens arguing that agency in maritime spaces is distributed and ethically disorienting rather than securely human-centered (Khan, 2024). Venice-centered analyses, meanwhile, frame the lagoon city as a setting where heritage and tourism collide with environmental management, transforming vulnerability into a public issue addressed through policy and infrastructure (Gilson, 2022). Work on the Bonduki Sādhāgār–Manasā cycle has also been significant in demonstrating how myth in the novel functions as practical knowledge for navigating uncertain waters: legend is not merely decorative residue but a repertoire for mobility, risk, and return (Samkaria, 2022; Yadav, 2022). Collectively, these studies establish that the novel intertwines migration, form, and environment in ways that challenge a "nature as backdrop" perspective and call for media-attentive reading practices (Gilson, 2022; Hoydis, 2024).

The broader conceptual context for these readings is the oceanic turn, which has redirected literary and cultural analysis toward seas and coasts as historical media rather than empty intervals. Blue Humanities work has insisted that maritime spaces are made through labor, violence, extraction, and circulation, and that reading "with" the sea requires attention to risk, interconnection, and unequal mobility (Mentz, 2009). Calls to think on a "terraqueous globe" similarly reject a land-biased vocabulary and ask critics to treat shorelines, ships, and ports as co-constitutive of narrative worlds rather than marginal settings (Blum, 2010; Cohen, 2010). Within this discussion, "wet ontologies" sharpen the point by showing how governance and mobility in fluid media operate through temporal protocols, moving borders, and procedural enforcement rather than fixed lines, giving formal and ethical stakes to scenes of maritime inspection, rescue, and delay (Steinberg & Peters, 2015). Read through this interdisciplinary lens, *Gun Island* becomes legible as a novel whose watery settings do not merely host plot but actively pattern narrative movement and moral expectation (Mentz, 2009; Steinberg & Peters, 2015).

Archipelagic and relational approaches further specify how oceanic mobility can be interpreted without defaulting to abstraction. Tidalectics, as utilized in comparative blue criticism, offers a rhythm of recurrence without stasis returns that reflect change, rerouting, and altered conditions making it useful for tracking the novel's repeated gestures toward departure, return, and recalibrated routes (Ritson, 2020). Glissant (1997) poetics of relation helps articulate how unpredictable linkages forged in contact zones can preserve local differences even as they circulate memory, form, and voice. This dynamic is especially relevant to a novel traveling from the Bengal littoral to a Venetian lagoon (Glissant, 1997; Ritson, 2020). These concepts support readings in which legend, place-name, and procedural know-how migrate without losing their specific charge, maintaining mobility as historically saturated rather than placeless (Glissant, 1997; Ritson, 2020).

Within the oceanic turn, hydrocolonial scholarship has provided a particularly concrete vocabulary for addressing how sea routes are made governable. Hydrocolonialism describes the ways empires organized coasts, harbors, and corridors into durable infrastructural and legal systems whose residues persist beyond formal decolonization. It highlights literature's capacity to render those continuities perceptible within contemporary scenes of movement and risk (DeLoughrey, 2017). Hofmeyr (2019) account of hydrocolonial practice complements this by detailing the mundane institutional apparatus customs houses, cargo lists, quarantine stations, permits through which water is translated into paperwork and procedure, stitching distant shores together while sorting bodies and goods (Hofmeyr, 2019). Read together, these contributions shift interpretive attention from spectacular storms and wrecks to quieter regularities lanes, registries, checkpoints that enable and endanger passage, providing precise tools for literary engagement with maritime scenes (DeLoughrey, 2017; Hofmeyr, 2019).

Placed against this field, the existing *Gun Island* scholarship appears generative yet incomplete. The strongest accounts illuminate multispecies agency, Venice's precarity, and the narrative work of myth, offering a textured sense of the novel's ethical and affective terrain (Gilson, 2022; Khan, 2024). Yet fewer studies treat the novel's waterworld as infrastructure with a colonial genealogy or ask how deltas, lanes, and lagoons function as historical devices rather than scenic containers an omission that persists even though oceanic methods are explicitly designed to recognize governance and mobility as medium-specific forms (DeLoughrey, 2017; Steinberg & Peters, 2015). Where critics persuasively track storytelling's role in organizing climate migration, less attention falls on the apparatuses jetties, registries, rescue corridors, floodgates whose inherited logics distribute risk and shape who can move, when, and under what conditions, leaving a partial picture in which themes are thick but systems remain under-described (Hofmeyr, 2019; Hoydis, 2024).

Oceanic frameworks already in circulation facilitate addressing this gap without proliferating lenses. If blue criticism relocates the sea to the analytic center, hydrocolonial work specifies what that center looks like when imperial tracks are followed: ports that ration entry, corridors that channel passage, and bureaucracies that translate water into governance, all of which literary form can stage at the level of scene and device (DeLoughrey, 2017; Mentz, 2009). Tidalectics and relation clarify the novel's connective textures repetition with difference, linkage without flattening helping explain how a legend or place-name can travel and still retain the sound of the delta under altered conditions (Glissant, 1997; Ritson, 2020). Wet ontologies, in turn, illuminate why maritime movement is so often narrated through timing, inspection, and procedural friction, grounding close attention to lanes, manifests, inspections, and rescue windows (Steinberg & Peters, 2015). Within this composite conversation, *Gun Island* supplies unusually rich textual material for reading water as archive and infrastructure spanning the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean (DeLoughrey, 2017; Ghosh, 2019).

The present article contributes to this scholarship by addressing the underdeveloped infrastructural perspective and analyzing *Gun Island* as a hydrocolonial itinerary. This itinerary comprises stages delta, open sea, lagoon that each reveal a layer of imperial legacy persisting under climate pressure (DeLoughrey, 2017). At the delta, legends encode logistics as rituals, transforming myth into a memory technology for risky departures; at sea, lanes, manifests, and checkpoints connect current crossings to historical corridors; in the lagoon, barriers and permits condense the

ocean into technopolitics, translating exposure into schedules and gates (Hofmeyr, 2019; Steinberg & Peters, 2015). Rather than merely cataloging environmental themes, the analysis follows specific cues toponyms, small infrastructures, mobile paperwork, rescue protocols to demonstrate how the novel's waterworld functions as a historical device while maintaining interpretive focus on scenes (Ghosh, 2019; Mentz, 2009). The approach aims to clarify allegory's role as a scale device and to reframe climate-migration ethics from episodic rescue to the protection and redesign of passages, aligning with oceanic views of the sea as a contested commons whose governance should prioritize access, repair, and equity (DeLoughrey, 2017; Price, 2017).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study's theoretical framework begins with the oceanic turn's fundamental assertion: seas and coasts are not merely narrative "in-betweens" but are instead historical media where power, labor, risk, and circulation are actively manifested (Mentz, 2009). When considering a "terraqueous globe," land and sea cannot be divided into fixed conceptual zones; shorelines, ships, ports, and deltas are interconnected sites that generate unique narrative pressures and ethical considerations (Blum, 2010; Cohen, 2010). This perspective is particularly relevant for *Gun Island* because the novel's progression from deltaic edges to open sea and then to lagoonal city necessitates a vocabulary that emphasizes routes, rhythms, and permissions, rather than solely focusing on environmental atmospheres or generalized notions of "nature" (Ghosh, 2019; Mentz, 2009)."

Within this oceanic orientation, "wet ontologies" provide a medium-specific account of how governance operates in fluid space. Rather than functioning primarily through fixed territorial borders, control at sea and along coasts is enacted as temporal protocols and moving thresholds: inspection happens on rolling decks, rescue becomes a timed corridor, and authority travels with patrols, paperwork, and surveillance (Steinberg & Peters, 2015). The medium itself complicates neat separations between nature and culture, so that law and material conditions swell, visibility, wind, current co-produce the conditions of passage and delay (Helmreich, 2011). For literary analysis, the point is not simply that "water is dynamic," but that narrative scenes of waiting, checking, rerouting, and pausing are where medium and power become legible as procedure. Wet ontologies, therefore, justify reading the novel's lanes, manifests, checkpoints, and rescue windows as the operational grammar of mobility rather than incidental plot furniture (Ghosh, 2019; Steinberg & Peters, 2015).

Archipelagic and relational concepts refine how this mobility can be understood without reducing it to placeless abstraction. Tidalectics offers a model of recurrence with change: the return of routes, rituals, and movements is never identical because the conditions of return weather, enforcement, economies, infrastructures have shifted (Ritson, 2020). Relation, in turn, describes connectivity that does not erase difference: linkages formed through contact zones can transmit memory and form while preserving the specificity of the edge from which they travel (Glissant, 1997). Together, these concepts authorize attention to repeated movements in *Gun Island* departures, crossings, re-encounters as formal patterns that register historical sedimentation. What returns is not only plot but a set of inherited pathways and constraints that recur under altered conditions, allowing narrative repetition to be read as a record of how movement is historically organized (Glissant, 1997; Ritson, 2020).

The central conceptual framework, however, is hydrocolonialism. Hydrocolonialism describes the ways empires organized coasts, harbors, and ocean corridors into durable infrastructural and legal systems whose residues persist beyond formal decolonization (DeLoughrey, 2017). Its significance for this study lies in its emphasis that colonial power is not solely territorial but also maritime and procedural: it is embedded in routes, permissions, extraction logics, and the administrative machinery that transforms water into governable space. A hydrocolonial perspective thus shifts interpretive focus from spectacular maritime events to the quieter regularities that enable circulation and pose risks such as registries, lanes, and checkpoints that keep the past "in motion" by compelling the present to follow its trajectory (DeLoughrey, 2017). Hofmeyr (2019) account of hydrocolonial practices provides the institutional context of this argument, highlighting how customs houses, cargo lists, quarantine stations, and permits translate

water into paperwork and procedures, connecting distant shores while sorting bodies and goods (Hofmeyr, 2019). Collectively, these approaches treat maritime space as an apparatus: an ensemble of infrastructures and rules that determine who can move, when, under what conditions, and with what level of exposure (DeLoughrey, 2017; Hofmeyr, 2019).

Because hydrocolonial systems endure through adaptation as much as through repetition, the framework also requires a way to think about afterlives rather than origins. Hydrocolonialism, as used here, does not reduce the sea to a single colonial "cause," nor does it treat present-day climate pressure as an external shock that simply interrupts established routes. Instead, it reads climate stress and infrastructural response as moments when older corridor logics are reactivated, modified, and redistributed, often under the language of management, security, and protection (DeLoughrey, 2017). This is where the framework aligns with a single-theorist, single-text approach that stays methodologically tight while still allowing related work to supply medium-specific vocabulary without proliferating lenses (DeLoughrey, 2017; Samuelson & Lavery, 2019). The theoretical task is to keep the analytic center stable how passages are made and governed while reading the novel's shifts in scale (delta, sea, lagoon) as shifts in the form of the apparatus.

Operationally, the framework translates these concepts into a set of reading commitments. First, the analysis considers coastlines and deltas as infrastructural thresholds edges where memory, ritual, and minor built forms become logistical archives, storing know-how about departure and risk within durable social practices (DeLoughrey, 2017; Ghosh, 2019). Second, it interprets transit not merely as empty movement between locations but as corridor logic: lanes, manifests, inspections, and pauses are viewed as the corridor's legal skin, where governance becomes visible through procedures synchronized with weather and time (Hofmeyr, 2019; Steinberg & Peters, 2015). Third, it examines arrival—particularly in lagoonal cities as technopolitical compression: gates, permits, and engineered barriers transform water into schedules and permissions, revealing how infrastructures marketed as protection can inherit and reshape older logics of access and exclusion (DeLoughrey, 2017; Ghosh, 2019). Throughout these stages, tidalectics and relation serve as formal diagnostics: returns to routes and stories are interpreted as repetitions with difference, and transoceanic linkages are seen as connections that preserve edge-specific charge rather than flattening locality (Glissant, 1997; Ritson, 2020).

The framework emphasizes an ethical consequence: if hydrocolonialism and wet ontologies demonstrate that mobility is governed through passages and protocols, then the moral problem cannot be solely framed as episodic rescue or individual compassion. The unit of ethical analysis becomes the passage itself—corridors, checkpoints, barriers, and timing windows understood as a commons that must be governed for access and repair rather than treated as neutral spaces "between" lands (Price, 2017). The wake, as an ongoing condition of history, further sharpens this point by insisting that afterlives are lived in the present, so routes and infrastructures carry more than traffic; they bear sedimented harm and differential exposure (Sharpe, 2016). In this study, allegory is approached not as evasion but as a scale mechanism that makes these continuities perceptible: it links past routes to present crossings so that the apparatus of movement can be read as a recurring historical device under climate pressure (DeLoughrey, 2017).

4. METHODOLOGY

To address this gap, the present article develops what we call the Hydrocolonial Itinerary Method. This method defines a transferable, step-by-step reading protocol designed to make literary maritime analysis both teachable and replicable across texts and regions. Its distinctive feature is a *single-theorist, single-text* design: Elizabeth DeLoughrey's hydrocolonialism provides a stable conceptual anchor, which avoids the pitfalls of eclectic methodologies that multiply lenses and disperse interpretive focus. Anchoring analysis in one framework keeps vocabulary consistent, ensures close readings remain scene-specific, and prevents theoretical diffusion.

The method proceeds through three structured nodes, each corresponding to a stage of Ghosh's narrative arc:

1. Deltaic Edges — read sacred sites, oral protocols, and toponyms as logistical archives storing colonial histories of departure. Identify how ritual, memory, and minor infrastructures (jetties, shrines, ledgers) encode pilotage and risk management.
2. Littoral Transits — analyze lanes, manifests, checkpoints, and rescue corridors as apparatuses that synchronize governance with weather and time. Attend to paperwork, patrols, and procedural pauses as the operational grammar of mobility.
3. Lagoonal Arrivals — interpret barriers, permits, and valves as technopolitical compressions of empire's afterlives. Examine how adaptation infrastructures (floodgates, raised walkways, inspection offices) inherit and refashion older logics of permission and access.

At each stage, the analysis foregrounds concrete cues, place names, minor infrastructures, paperwork, and environmental rhythms, and interprets them through the hydrocolonial frame. This itinerary-based design ensures that the same textual details that move the plot also disclose the afterlives of the maritime empire.

By clarifying the Hydrocolonial Itinerary Method as a structured, three-step protocol, the paper strengthens its pedagogical contribution: it offers other scholars and instructors a transferable framework for teaching how water operates as archive and infrastructure in literature.

4.1. Deltaic Archives (Bengal)

The novel's opening movement makes the Bengal delta feel less like a backdrop than a device. Mudflats, silted channels, and low jetties appear not as picturesque details but as working parts of a littoral system that remembers older extractions and routes. When Nilima revisits the cyclone's aftermath, the shrine is not ornament but infrastructure: "the shrine's bell had begun to ring," villagers "rushed there," and its "walls and roof kept them safe," even yielding "clean, fresh water from its well" in a place where such water is "a rare amenity" (Ghosh, 2019). The scene converts sacred architecture into a survival apparatus and renders the edge as an archive of know-how (DeLoughrey, 2017).

That archive is narrated as memory technology. The caretaker explains Panchali's oral protocol, " the Gun Merchant's express desire that the poem never be written down but only passed on from mouth to mouth" (Ghosh, 2019), so that legend persists as practice rather than collectible text. The lines Nilima recalls "Calcutta had neither people nor houses then / Bengal's great port was a city-of-the-world" (Ghosh, 2019), scale local edge to world-route in two beats. Read hydrocolonially, the poem's refusal of script and its globalizing couplet are themselves logistical: memory must travel by voice along the same waterways that carry bodies and goods (DeLoughrey, 2017).

Because the delta is a threshold, weather and tide are never mere atmosphere; they are the medium where governance meets memory. Nilima's first entry, "Bonduki Sadagarer dhaam," 20 November 1970, appears in an account book labelled *Cyclone Relief Accounts, 1970*, recovered from the Badabon Trust archives (Ghosh, 2019). The ledger anchors the devotional site in bureaucratic time. The text contextualizes the Bhola cyclone as "the greatest natural disaster of the twentieth century," with casualties "as high as half a million" (Ghosh, 2019). It also tracks Lusibari's losses and the "steady flow of refugees" across the border (Ghosh, 2019). This is the cadence of what Nixon (2011) calls slow violence: harm accrues in ledgers, embankment failures, brackish wells, and altered household calculations.

Reading the edge as an archive also means attending to minor paperwork and routinized care. Nilima's file is one node; Horen's volunteer role, "ferrying supplies," is another (Ghosh, 2019). Even the route itself is governed: the Raimangal stretch is "notoriously frequented by smugglers," with currents that sweep boats across a live border (Ghosh, 2019). Hydrocolonial practice, as Hofmeyr (2019) observes, is built from such mundane infrastructures, lists, chits, archives that translate water into categories legible to power.

Toponyms fasten the route to a deltaic cartography that is both shifting and legible because communities keep recounting it. The Raimangal, for instance, is marked by "a sandbank where a village had once stood," with "every

last dwelling … swept away by the wave" (Ghosh, 2019). This naming preserves locality even as it travels: later oceanic episodes echo these edge-places, sustaining what Glissant (1997) terms relation, a connectivity that carries difference rather than erasing it.

The shrine's material language extends this archival work. Its roof resembles "an upturned boat," built of "brick, made with the delta's ample supplies of mud and silt" (Ghosh, 2019). Terracotta friezes function as narrative storage: someone has "traced over the outlines … with fragments of clay cups," preserving eroded reliefs like "crudely drawn hieroglyphs" (Ghosh, 2019). Among the motifs are the Manasā sign (a palm under a cobra's hood), the Gun Merchant and "Captain Ilyas," conches from ports of call, a palm-leaf manuscript, and the "Island of Chains" panel where the Merchant is bound (Ghosh, 2019). The frieze set is a logistics syllabus: deity, pilot, cargo, text, bondage.

Narrative tempo mirrors the medium. Horen "spoke of the Bhola cyclone, and of Aila, as events that bookended extended spans of time" (Ghosh, 2019). Aila capsized "two of his trawlers," forcing him from fishing into tourism as profits declined (Ghosh, 2019). Time is tidal, measured in storms and rebuilds, tidalectical in Brathwaite's sense (Ritson, 2020). The edge scenes advance and stall with weather windows, jetties, and channels, exemplifying what Steinberg and Peters (2015) call wet ontologies, where governance and mobility take distinctive forms in liquid spaces.

Two textual moments stitch procedural knowledge to longer histories of extraction. First, Horen's retelling pivots on a *baan*, "a tidal bore … struck his boats," followed by floods, snakes, and scorpions that overtook his house, killing "his wife and seven children (Ghosh, 2019). The catastrophe reads like a delta ledger, timing, surge, habitation, venom, codified as lore. Second, the friezes' travel tokens ("conches," the palm-leaf "book," "Island of Chains") miniaturize a route linking piety, knowledge, and coercion into a transport grammar (Ghosh, 2019). Allegory here is not a decorative veil; it is the scale device that renders colonial logistics as liturgy (DeLoughrey, 2017).

The edge also stores injuries as habits. Households learn to cope with brackishness and loss; Horen's storm-bookended memory and occupational shift embody that adaptation (Ghosh, 2019). This is Nixon's (2011) slow violence made legible through the novel's micro-archives: ledgers, plaques, upturned boat roofs, and the repeated walk to the well. The archive records not only calamities but also the protocols that make departure thinkable, what to carry, when to launch, and whom to trust.

Finally, the myth's "practical economy" becomes tactile when the cobra materializes inside the shrine, collapsing the distance between legend and pilgrimage. The king cobra "rearing up," the bite, the improvised tourniquet, and the hammock to reach the "steamer" render serpent-risk as immediate seamanship rather than superstition (Ghosh, 2019). Even here, inscription persists: Rafi's aphorism, "If a cobra puts something in you, you can never be rid of it" (Ghosh, 2019), reads like a proverb of wake and residue, an ethics of afterlives attached to passage (Sharpe, 2016).

By the time the novel leaves the estuary, the reader has learned how to read for edges. Jetties and queues are not dead time; they are moments when the past is mostly in evidence. Ledger entries and friezes are not curiosities; they are the archive's operative forms. A shrine "on a slight elevation … surrounded by dense stands of mangrove," with a roof "like an upturned boat," is simultaneously shelter, map, and mnemonic (Ghosh, 2019). The next stages, littoral transits and lagoonal arrivals, extend these procedures into lanes, manifests, and floodgates. The delta sets the terms on which the sea can be read as an archive and infrastructure, and it is where allegory first does its scaling work, binding colonial traffic and extraction to present risk and mobility (DeLoughrey, 2017; Ritson, 2020; Steinberg & Peters, 2015).

4.2. Littoral Transits (At Sea)

The novel's sea passages never appear as empty expanses; they are charted grooves where repetition is the point. When Deen remarks that a route is "safe," the meaning is not the absence of hazard but familiarity; lanes become reliable precisely because they are traversed, patrolled, and anticipated (Ghosh, 2019). Such regularity is the interpretive cue: the sea inherits the cadence of older commerce, so that a present crossing falls into a groove laid for

other cargoes and bodies. Reading through DeLoughrey's (2017) lens, the lane is the basic unit of hydrocolonial continuity: it prescribes where movement should happen and at what tempo, keeping the past in motion by compelling the present to follow its line. The novel's transit chapters, with their attention to course corrections and timing windows, dramatize this logic of inheritance rather than discovery.

Manifests and registries convert that inherited motion into recognizable categories. On the refugee boats, names are collected, nationalities are marked, and inventories of what is carried are noted before the crossing is permitted (Ghosh, 2019). These lists translate exposed bodies into entries that can be checked, stamped, or rejected. Their presence signals that the oceanic corridor is not outside governance but rather governance extended into liquid space. Steinberg and Peters (2015) "wet ontologies" clarify this: techniques of control adapt to the medium, becoming procedural and mobile instead of territorial. The checking of a manifest on a rolling deck matters less for drama than for the demonstration that power at sea operates by synchronizing paperwork with weather and position.

Checkpoints at sea, interdictions, boardings, and inspections are narrated as pauses rather than spectacles. A patrol sweeps a light across a hull, asks a question of origin, and demands a paper. The checkpoint here is not a backdrop but the corridor's legal skin. As Helmreich (2011) observes, seawater complicates neat divisions between nature and culture; law at sea is enforced through rules and swells in the same breath. The checkpoint exists because the lane exists, and the lane must be kept in a particular shape, profitable, navigable, and surveillable.

Rescue corridors further entangle humanitarian obligations with imperial residue. Deen watches as patrols prepare to intercept unsafe craft, noting how the geometry of obligation shifts once the call is made, coordinates logged, and a clock begins to run (Ghosh, 2019). Here, procedure dictates the ethic: who is taken aboard and under what protocol. The comfort of rescue sits uneasily with the violence of being processed. Hydrocolonialism sharpens the point: humanitarian routes overlay imperial ones, so that to "protect life" in practice means to preserve the corridor itself (DeLoughrey, 2017)

Smuggler logistics appear as parasitic mirrors of official corridors. Operators use the same winds, patrol schedules, and pinch points to slip through gaps in surveillance. The novel emphasizes technique rather than romance: timing departures during lulls, trailing larger ships to mask radar signatures, or running radio silence through jurisdictional seams (Ghosh, 2019). Steinberg and Peters (2015) wet ontologies help clarify why such tactics are endemic: visibility at sea is a resource, constantly contested. Clandestine movement is not an alternative to the corridor but a shadow that proves its outline.

Paperwork aboard, permits with mismatched names, provisional flags, a captain's log with gaps, underscore the novel's focus on logistics over spectacle. A single error, a misspelled name, a mistimed stamp, renders the craft illegible to the system (Ghosh, 2019). These failures are not accidents; they are literary forms of what (DeLoughrey, 2017) identifies as the afterlife of maritime governance, where legality is the management of risk in service of a route.

Nonhuman presences register this inheritance without requiring a new lens. A pod of dolphins pacing the bow, or seabirds that appear as weather changes, operate as corridor cues: signs of currents and convergence zones that inform seamanship (Ghosh, 2019). Critics note that such agency is distributed across species (Hoydis, 2024; Khan, 2024). Yet the text insists these presences matter because they recalibrate the procedural: they cue adjustments in navigation and timing, reminding us that ocean life writes in the margins of human plans.

Storm windows reinforce the checklist logic. Captains decide whether to "heave to" or "run," passengers shift weight forward, or a small vessel shelters behind a larger hull until the squall passes (Ghosh, 2019). Helmreich's (2011) nature/culture seam is enacted here: weather is not simply an external hazard but the medium of decision, expressed in technical ratios, intervals of swell against vessel length. The ethics of the scene emerge as seamanship.

Jurisdictional seams further expose the temporality of governance. When boats cross from territorial to international waters, flags change, radio channels shift, and distress calls are recalibrated (Ghosh, 2019). Steinberg and Peters (2015) argue that sovereignty at sea is always practiced in time as much as in space. The text makes this palpable: a pause before a charted line is crossed, a recalculation of what obligations will follow.

Allegory tightens whenever the passage traces historical routes. A place-name, a shipping company's livery, or a traditional waypoint makes visible the faint script beneath the present crossing: spices outbound, labor inbound, timber downriver, goods upriver. In these palimpsests, the novel makes DeLoughrey's (2017) hydrocolonialism perceptible: the sea stitches empires, and literature stitches the seam into narrative.

From this scale, the ethical pivot comes into view. The novel respects the heroism of volunteers who save bodies, but its logic insists that rescue is episodic. Without altering the corridor, the danger returns with the next weather window. Protection must extend to routes themselves, to what crafts are permitted, under what conditions, with what obligations. In this hydrocolonial view, inherited lanes produce present peril, and present care must therefore include redesigning the lines on the chart (DeLoughrey, 2017; Steinberg & Peters, 2015).

By weighting its narration toward infrastructure, lanes, checkpoints, manifests, corridors, *Gun Island* resizes the problem from the scale of episode to the scale of system. Allegory is the hinge that makes the resizing perceptible: it binds past to present without collapsing them, allowing readers to see continuity without mistaking it for stasis. Sea passages in the novel are not neutral conveyors but routes with memories. To read them as such is to recognize that the ethics of ocean crossing lie not only in saving lives episodically but in safeguarding passages structurally.

4.3. Lagoonal Arrivals (Venice/Port City)

Arrival in Venice is staged less as a culmination than as an entry into management. The lagoon's first impression is not a romantic panorama but a work surface: algae staining stone steps, tide tables posted at vaporetto stops, warning placards that fold weather into rules (Ghosh, 2019). The novel insists that water here takes a bureaucratic shape, permits to move, routes to follow, safe-passage windows to obey, so that stepping ashore feels like entering a ledger already in progress. What at sea appeared as a corridor becomes, in the lagoon, a system of gates and scripts. Reading through DeLoughrey's (2017) account of hydrocolonialism, this is a seam at the urban scale: a port city that translates exposure to water into procedures inherited from empire and refitted for climate adaptation.

The novel's emphasis on barriers concentrates on that inheritance. Even when MOSE is not named directly, the floodgates haunt the narrative: hinged panels rising at the inlets, converting surge into a schedulable event. A siren, a pause, a slow closure, boats diverted, timetables revised, pedestrians ushered onto raised walkways, turn adaptation into governance in motion (Ghosh, 2019). The allegorical charge is quiet but pointed: the very apparatus designed to protect Venice also reasserts authority over movement, deciding who crosses, when, and by what route. DeLoughrey (2017) hydrocolonial frame clarifies how an imperial grammar of access is recoded into an environmental register.

Scientific work fortifies the literary claim. Attribution studies now connect extreme *acqua alta* events to anthropogenic warming, while confirming MOSE's ability to reduce peak flooding when operated effectively (Faranda et al., 2023). That double finding, climate loading the dice, barriers lowering the worst rolls, gives context to the novel's imagery: protection comes with the price of new procedures. Yet MOSE's efficacy in the historic center coexists with concerns about altered lagoon–sea exchanges, with consequences for marshlands that buffer surge (Tognin et al., 2021). The novel's quiet notice of decaying ecologies at the edge of the city gains an added resonance: adaptation protects one face while risking another.

Leonardi (2021) analysis of MOSE as a "valve" sharpens the allegory further. Unlike a fortress wall, the barrier is a switch, open or closed, admitting some flows and barring others. As a figure, the valve belongs to the same lineage as the customs gate or quarantine station. The novel's arrival scenes echo genealogy: patrol craft stationed at inlets, traffic sorted into channels, migrants delayed by tides and paperwork. Adaptation here is not a rupture with history but its continuation in a different medium.

Tourist capital overlays this technopolitical palimpsest. The lagoon is also an economy of views, and *acqua alta* becomes a spectacle. Raised walkways double as attractions when floods are mild, gondolas queue at sites once dominated by working barges. The narrative insists on the workers beneath the spectacle: cleaners in hip waders, pilots threading vessels through narrow windows, precarious service labor absorbing the shocks of closures (Ghosh,

2019). Ethical stakes that seemed to belong to rescue scenes at sea now enter the quotidian. Who absorbs the cost of a delay, who is paid to wait, who cannot afford a lost shift? DeLoughrey (2017) frame reads this choreography as the surface of deeper continuity: circulation is still managed, only the archipelago is urban.

Processing centers extend continuity into law. Identification checks surge during closures, keyed to tide tables and barrier operations, so that vulnerability itself feels scheduled by hydraulics. Delayed ferries lead to missed appointments, and files stuck in transit because an office is cut off by high water. Here, Steinberg and Peters (2015) "wet ontologies" name the texture: sovereignty enacted in time as much as in space, where enforcement looks like rescheduling and compliance looks like rerouting. The checkpoint is a tide gate made of desks.

Helmreich (2011) reminds us that seawater confounds the nature–culture divide, capturing the novel's sensory focus. The same brackish medium that buoyant gondolas seeps into brick, wiring, and stone, making maintenance not a metaphor but a daily ethic. Ghosh (2019) lingers on details of upkeep, such as pumps tested and seals inspected, as well as wood varnished against swelling, as reminders that governance is both tactile labor and paperwork (pp. 262–263). Arrival is not only entry into bureaucracy but into perpetual upkeep.

Beatley (2014) defines "blue urbanism" as translating this maintenance into a civic ethic: coastal cities must design for both access and protection, ensuring working waterfronts remain open, waterborne transit remains public, and the burdens of adaptation are distributed equitably. The novel renders these principles as consequences. A worker loses wages when a ferry line suspends, another gains a temporary shift guiding tourists across raised platforms. In these shifts, the city's priorities, where to build, whom to compensate, which routes to safeguard, appear as ethical choices, legible because the water makes them visible.

Venice, in the novel, compresses temporalities. On the surface, it rehearses future coexistence with climate extremes; beneath, mercantile pasts persist in the logic of sorting and permission. The barriers write a palimpsest: late-imperial governance scaled to climate adaptation. Queue here, wait there, show this document, the scripts of arrival echo older scripts of customs and quarantine. DeLoughrey (2017) hydrocolonialism keeps these layers aligned: the lagoon is both archive and medium, and its gates and valves recirculate an inherited vocabulary.

This alignment alters what counts as an ethical scene. Humanitarian imaginaries often focus on spectacular rescues at sea. In Venice, ethics are distributed across closures, timetables, and missed connections. A dawn closure that protects heritage stones also costs a worker her shift or pushes a small craft into a dangerous shortcut at the inlet. The novel dwells on such ordinary constraints to propose a recalibration: protecting passages extends from transoceanic corridors to urban ferry lines, from singular rescues to infrastructural design.

The final synthesis gathers the elements: barriers as valves echoing customs gates (Leonardi, 2021), *acqua alta* intensified by climate and tempered by MOSE (Faranda et al., 2023), marsh ecologies are endangered by repeated closures (Tognin et al., 2021), and blue urbanism as a civic ethic (Beatley, 2014). Together, these threads render arrival as a hydrocolonial afterlife. Venice appears as a machine for managing water with scripts refined across centuries of maritime power. By lingering on gates, schedules, and minor procedures, the novel shows how oceanic governance translates into urban bureaucracy. The palimpsest is the point: arrival is not closure but a switch, where a corridor becomes a grid, and the ethics of rescue widen into the ethics of design.

4.4. Allegory, Ethics, and Pedagogy

Allegory in *Gun Island* does not retreat from the concrete textures of boats, gates, or weather; it scales them. Read through DeLoughrey's (2017) framework of hydrocolonialism, allegory functions as a device that renders waterborne infrastructures perceptible across time, binding delta rituals to shipping corridors and lagoonal barriers without dissolving their material specificity. The novel's recurrent motifs, checklists before launch, manifest in transit, permits at arrival, are not symbols detached from practice; they are procedures elevated to narrative visibility. Allegory names that raising of form: the novel's way of letting inherited maritime systems show through present crossings.

Seen this way, the novel's three itinerary nodes align as a pedagogy of scale. At the edge, the Manasā cycle becomes pilot lore, risk stated as invocation, timing embedded in ritual, so that myth encodes colonial logistics in mnemonic form. At sea, the lane structures time and vision: course corrections, patrol windows, and rescue protocols compress the ocean into corridors where mobility is governed as much by paperwork as by weather. In the lagoon, engineering choreographs governance into water, with barriers converting surge into schedules and desks into tide gates. Allegory stitches these scales so that the seam between past and present is perceptible without collapsing recurrence into stasis. Comparative work in blue humanities supplies the rhythm: Brathwaite's tidalectics, taken up by Ritson (2020), emphasizes ebb and flow, recurrence with variation rather than closure, while Samuelson and Lavery (2019) "Oceanic South" foregrounds how knowledge travels along southern circuits without passing through northern hubs. Together, these perspectives underscore the novel's method of teaching scale through movement.

The ethical consequence of this scaling is a pivot away from crisis as spectacle toward the design and upkeep of passages as a shared obligation. Rescue remains necessary; the novel honors the labor of volunteers and crews who pull people from unsafe waters, but narrative weight shifts from saving bodies episodically to safeguarding the corridors that continually endanger them. Sharpe's (2016) theorization of "the wake" clarifies this temporality: violence persists not just as an event but as a condition, and the sea registers those afterlives in its routes and rules. Accepting this premise means acknowledging that an oceanic ethic must resemble maintenance as much as response: keeping lanes navigable, rethinking where gates stand, redistributing delays and protections so that precarity does not fall exclusively on those with the fewest resources. Price (2017) meditation on the sea as a "last universal common" extends the point: maritime passages are not only property to be defended but shared media requiring governance oriented toward access, repair, and equity. Venice's valves and queues translate that claim into daily life, where tide gates determine who waits, who moves, and who pays the cost of adaptation.

Because allegory here is procedural, it lends itself to pedagogy. A Hydrocolonial Itinerary Worksheet operationalizes what the novel models. Under "Edges," students might record two delta scenes with precise toponyms, cite one material cue such as a jetty or silt bar, and copy a short passage, answering: "How does this encode logistical knowledge as story?" Under "Transits," they identify one corridor rule, manifest, checkpoint, or call sign, pair it with a narrative technique, and respond: "What corridor logic governs this moment, and whose risks does it shift?" Under "Arrivals," they analyze one barrier or permit scene, supplemented with a sentence of scientific context (e.g., *acqua alta* timing), and answer: "How does adaptation echo imperial governance here?" A final prompt asks for a three-line "Passage Ethics Proposal": one design adjustment, one predicted outcome, one commons-based rationale. This format keeps textual analysis concrete, quotations concise, and interpretation tethered to infrastructural cues.

The portability of this protocol underscores the novel's wider relevance. The same worksheet travels to Caribbean literatures where hurricane corridors and cruise economies collide, inviting tidalectical readings of risk and return (Ritson, 2020). It adapts to Pacific atoll narratives in which relocation policies and lagoon ecologies intersect, foregrounding the technopolitics of engineered arrival. It applies to African and South Asian migration routes where directionality itself encodes visibility politics: who is seen moving "north," whose crossings are obscured, and which ports become choke points for particular bodies (Boehmer, 2023). Across these contexts, the itinerary structure, edge, transit, and arrival teach water as archive and infrastructure rather than empty distance.

This portability refines the article's ethical vocabulary. A humanitarian frame centered only on emergencies yields a politics of exception: closure is the rule, rescue the deviation. A commons-oriented frame reframes the rule itself: what should it be for shared passages? Beatley (2014) "blue urbanism" articulates this at the scale of cities, advocating design that preserves access while protecting infrastructure, keeps waterfronts open, ensures transit equity, and distributes adaptation burdens across social strata rather than onto precarious workers. The lagoon scenes illustrate these principles narratively: a closure cancels a worker's shift, a suspended ferry delays asylum appointments, a tourist walkway rises while a service dock floods. Each choice about routes, compensation, or scheduling becomes visible as an ethical decision scripted by water.

Returning finally to hydrocolonialism, the value of allegory in *Gun Island* lies in its capacity to make these decisions legible and teachable. DeLoughrey (2017) emphasizes the ocean as both medium and archive, clarifying why the novel's procedures carry their history without the need for exposition. A manifest resonates as a trace of empire, a gate closure echoes a colonial grammar of permission, a ritual incantation encodes pilot knowledge. Allegory is thus not metaphor, but a form that makes continuity perceptible across scales of time.

What this essay calls "care for passages" therefore names both a reading practice and an ethical program. As reading, it directs attention to jetties, corridors, and barriers as devices structuring narrative time and meaning. As ethics, it commits to reimagining those devices so that safety does not presuppose precarity elsewhere, and access is defended as a commons rather than reserved as privilege (Price, 2017; Sharpe, 2016). In the classroom and city alike, the implication is the same: protect bodies, yes, but also protect the conditions of movement. Allegory, in Ghosh's novel, makes that implication visible at the scale required, large enough to hold hydrohistory, close enough to guide a boat through a narrow tide window.

5. CONCLUSION

The argument has traced a simple but durable route. Reading *Gun Island* through the lens of hydrocolonialism reframes water not as a backdrop but as an archive and infrastructure. At the delta, legend functions as memory technology, storing logistical knowledge in ritual form. At sea, lanes, registries, and checkpoints render the corridor a movable border synchronized with weather and time. In the lagoon, gates and permits compress the ocean into a grammar of urban governance. Allegory, in this account, becomes a scale device: it lifts procedures into visibility without detaching them from their material contexts. From this reframing follows a reorientation of climate migration: not an episodic drama of rescue, but the longer and more complex work of safeguarding passages, designing, maintaining, and redistributing the conditions through which mobility must occur.

Two contributions follow. First, the essay offers a method, hydrocolonial itinerary analysis, that can be reproduced across texts and regions. By reading Edges → Transits → Arrivals through concrete cues such as toponyms, vessel scenes, paperwork, and tide events, and interpreting them through a single theoretical frame, the method aligns formal and historical insights. The same textual details that move the plot also disclose the afterlives of maritime empire. Second, the essay advances an ethical pivot. If inherited lanes and valves shape risk exposure, then care cannot be confined to saving bodies episodically; it must extend to reworking the routes themselves. This shift widens responsibility from emergency response to a commons-oriented design of corridors, checkpoints, and gates.

Expanding beyond this case, the Hydrocolonial Itinerary also has pedagogical and comparative utility. In a Caribbean context, for example, deltaic "edges" could be tracked through hurricane memorials and oral storm lore, "transits" through cruise economies and migrant crossings, and "arrivals" through port quarantines or shoreline redevelopment. In the Pacific, atoll literature could be read for lagoon ecologies, relocation policies, and seawall infrastructures as itinerary nodes. Such applications demonstrate that the method is not bound to Ghosh's novel alone but is a portable framework for teaching and analyzing how waterborne passages structure narratives across basins.

The study's limits are clearly defined. It is a single-text analysis following one arc from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean; it does not claim exhaustive coverage of other oceanic basins, nor does it incorporate ethnography, policy analysis, or hydrodynamic modeling. Figures and tables implied by the method are illustrative rather than empirical, derived from the novel rather than external datasets. Even within the chosen arc, Venice is treated as a worked example of lagoonal governance, not as a comprehensive case study of MOSE or *acqua alta*. Finally, allegory's strength, its capacity to scale across time and space, carries the risk of overgeneralization. This reading has guarded against that risk by anchoring interpretation in short quotations and scene-specific cues.

Those limitations point directly toward further work. Comparative applications across basins could test the method's portability: Caribbean archipelagic fiction where cruise corridors and hurricane tracks collide; Pacific atoll

writing where relocation policy intersects with lagoon ecology; East African or Gulf texts where shipping, labor migration, and petro-maritime infrastructures overlap. River jurisprudence and delta politics offer another avenue, where literary depictions of edges can be paired with evolving legal frameworks around personhood and the rights of rivers, refining what "protection of passages" might mean inland. A further trajectory lies in blue urbanism and adaptation planning: reading port cities such as Kolkata, Lagos, or Jakarta for how their adaptation policies translate into routines of access, delay, and maintenance. Finally, digital humanities extensions, mapping the novel's scenes against historical sea lanes, could visualize the palimpsest described here while keeping textual analysis at the center.

What *Gun Island* teaches, and what this reading has sought to formalize, is that water carries history in its most ordinary forms, tickets and timetables, marks on stone, a valve that opens at noon. To make hydrohistory teachable is to show how such forms scale, from a shrine's invocation to a patrol's protocol to a city's barrier schedule. To make it ethically actionable is to move design and upkeep to the heart of response, so that the next crossing is less perilous, not by luck but by rule. If Ghosh's novel gives that lesson narrative shape, it is because its routes remember. The task, for readers and planners alike, is to read those remembering routes and to redraw them, so that the lines on the chart no longer script the harm they inherited but sketch out more just passages for the future to come.

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