

Research Article

# Reclaiming the Unreal: Myth, Non-Human Agency, and Literary Imagination in Amitav Ghosh's Climate Fiction

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**Abstract:** The accelerating climate crisis has prompted new directions in literature, especially within the genre of climate fiction (cli-fi). However, much of cli-fi remains bound to the conventions of Western realism, limiting its ability to capture the strangeness, scale, and non-human dimensions of ecological disruption. This article examines Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* as a significant departure from such narrative constraints. The aim of this research is to explore how *Gun Island* reclaims myth, supernatural elements, and non-Western epistemologies to offer an alternative model of climate storytelling—one that foregrounds multispecies agency, spiritual experience, and ecological entanglement. The study adopts a literary-analytical methodology, drawing on Ghosh's theoretical arguments in *The Great Derangement* (2016), as well as insights from ecofeminism, postcolonial theory, and multispecies justice frameworks. Findings show that *Gun Island* uses non-linear narrative, symbolic motifs, and uncanny coincidences to resist anthropocentrism and capitalist realism. The novel positions animals, natural forces, and mythic beings as active agents, challenging Enlightenment binaries between fact and fiction, science and story, human, and non-human. The article concludes that by embracing the “unreal,” Ghosh expands the imaginative capacity of cli-fi, urging a shift in literary form and ethical perspective. His narrative strategy invites readers to rethink realism itself in the age of planetary crisis, where re-enchantment may be vital to ecological awareness and survival.

**Keywords:** climate fiction; myth and supernatural; non-human agency; Anthropocene literature; multispecies justice

## 1. Introduction

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time, and literature has started to respond to this crisis in powerful ways. A growing body of work known as “climate fiction”, or cli-fi, has emerged over the past two decades. These stories often deal with environmental disasters, ecological collapse, or the human consequences of a warming planet. Many cli-fi writers try to raise awareness by showing how climate change affects ordinary people in their daily lives. However, most of these narratives still rely on traditional, realistic storytelling. They focus on individual characters, familiar settings, and clear cause-and-effect relationships. While this approach makes stories relatable, it also has important limitations.

Amitav Ghosh, a well-known Indian writer and thinker, addresses this problem in his influential book *The Great Derangement* (2016). In it, he argues that realism as a literary form is poorly equipped to represent the strange and overwhelming realities of climate change. Realism, he explains, developed during a time when human actions were believed to be central to the world, and nature was seen as stable and predictable. But climate change reveals a very different reality – one in which non-human forces like oceans, storms, or even viruses act on a global scale and with unpredictable consequences. These forces do not follow the neat timelines or personal narratives that realism prefers. For Ghosh, this is not just a stylistic concern; it reflects a deeper issue in modern literature's failure to reckon with planetary change.

Ghosh takes this critique further in his own climate novel, *Gun Island* (2019). Unlike much cli-fi, which stays within the boundaries of realism, *Gun Island* uses myths, supernatural events, and improbable coincidences. It brings together Bengali folktales, historical legends,

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stories of migration, and eerie natural phenomena in ways that seem fantastical or “unreal.” Some critics were puzzled by this approach. They described the novel as confusing, messy, or inconsistent. Others dismissed its ghostly elements as magical thinking, not serious literature. Such reactions reveal a strong bias in literary criticism: the belief that only rational, realistic stories can be meaningful or credible.

This article argues that Ghosh’s break from realism is deliberate and important. Rather than escaping reality, Ghosh is trying to reimagine it. His use of the “unreal” is a form of resistance – resistance to the narrow ways of seeing the world that realism encourages. By blending myth and reality, the novel challenges human-centered storytelling and invites readers to see the interconnectedness of human and non-human lives. In *Gun Island*, climate change is not just a backdrop; it is a living force that shapes migration, history, belief, and survival itself. The novel’s structure – non-linear, layered, and filled with strange overlaps – mirrors the tangled complexity of our ecological crisis.

Ghosh also draws connections between climate change and colonial history. The novel shows how environmental and human systems have long been shaped by trade, empire, and displacement. In doing so, it reminds us that today’s crisis is not only scientific or environmental – it is also cultural and political. The stories we tell about the planet matter. They shape what we see, what we ignore, and what we believe is possible.

By reclaiming the “unreal,” Ghosh opens up new ways of thinking and feeling about the climate emergency. His narrative strategy makes room for uncertainty, awe, and non-human agency – qualities that realism often excludes. This article will explore how *Gun Island* uses literary imagination as a form of resistance, showing that alternative storytelling can help us grasp the full scale and meaning of climate change. In a time when conventional narratives fall short, embracing the strange, the mythical, and the non-linear may be exactly what climate fiction – and the world – needs. This study aims to examine how *Gun Island* challenges dominant literary norms and contributes to climate fiction through its use of myth, supernatural elements, and non-human agency.

The research addresses the following questions:

1. How does *Gun Island* use myth and spiritual traditions to reframe climate change as a culturally embedded and emotionally resonant phenomenon?
2. How do narrative strategies such as coincidence, symbolism, and non-linear structure challenge the limits of Western realism in climate fiction?
3. In what ways does the novel grant agency to non-human forces, and how does this reshape the ethical landscape of climate storytelling?

## 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

As climate change becomes a central concern of our time, literature has started to respond through a growing genre known as climate fiction. While this genre has gained popularity, many scholars argue that its dominant form – realist fiction – often fails to capture the full complexity, unpredictability, and strangeness of our current ecological age. Realism, as a narrative mode, tends to focus on individual characters, personal experiences, and linear cause-and-effect storytelling. However, the scale and impact of climate change go far beyond individual lives. It operates over vast timescales, affects distant parts of the globe simultaneously, and involves non-human forces such as oceans, animals, and weather systems acting in unpredictable ways. As a result, conventional realism may be ill-equipped to reflect the true nature of the climate crisis.

Amitav Ghosh’s *The Great Derangement* (2016) has played a foundational role in this debate. In this non-fiction work, Ghosh argues that the modern novel, shaped by Enlightenment ideas of reason, progress, and individuality, has become inadequate in the face of the climate emergency. He criticizes the literary world’s emphasis on psychological depth and domestic realism, noting that such a narrow focus cannot accommodate the strange, terrifying, and large-scale phenomena we now face – such as sudden floods, animal migrations, or freak weather events. For Ghosh, this is not simply a stylistic concern but a deeper crisis of imagination, one that reflects a broader cultural failure to acknowledge our ecological reality.

Other critics have supported and expanded on Ghosh’s views. Scholars such as Rahman (2019) and Joshi (2019) argue that the publishing industry, driven by market demands, tends to favor conventional narratives that focus on relatable individuals and familiar emotions. Experimental or non-realist works that explore larger systems or challenge traditional forms often struggle to find space. This preference reinforces a limited worldview, where climate



change is seen as a distant or exceptional event, rather than something built into the very structures of global capitalism. Ghosh's novel *Gun Island* challenges this pattern by adopting a non-linear, fragmented narrative that links environmental damage to patterns of global trade, migration, and economic exploitation.

One important concept here is capitalist realism, a term coined by theorist Mark Fisher. It refers to the widespread belief that capitalism is the only viable economic and social system. Even climate fiction sometimes falls into this trap by portraying future worlds as hopeless dystopias. These visions, while powerful, can lead to resignation instead of action. Ghosh resists this in *Gun Island* by drawing on myths, symbols, and older ways of knowing. Through the use of coincidences, folklore, and supernatural events, he opens up imaginative spaces where different futures – and different relationships with the Earth – can be envisioned. This process of re-enchantment challenges the notion that the current system is inevitable.

Western literary traditions have long privileged rational, scientific, and male-centered knowledge, often dismissing emotional, spiritual, and Indigenous ways of understanding the world. Ecofeminist critics like Nayar (2012) have noted how such hierarchies silence other forms of wisdom – especially those associated with women, nature, and non-Western cultures. *Gun Island* pushes back against this bias. Characters in the novel interact with the snake goddess Manasa, and spiritual traditions are treated as meaningful rather than superstitious. Ghosh presents non-Western cosmologies where humans, animals, spirits, and natural forces are all deeply interconnected. Some scholars (Siganporia, 2019) point out that Ghosh uses myth and coincidence not as decorative elements, but as serious tools to express truths that science alone may not be able to capture.

Another concern raised by scholars is what Gupta (2019) terms the “credibility dilemma”. Many climate fiction authors feel compelled to stick closely to scientific accuracy in order to be taken seriously. While this lends authority to their narratives, it can also limit emotional resonance and imaginative scope. Ghosh takes a different route. In *Gun Island*, he embraces the strangeness of real climate events – unusual animal behavior, eerie weather patterns, and inexplicable coincidences – and combines them with storytelling traditions that blur the boundaries between fact and fiction. Critics like Supriya Chaudhuri interpret this as a conscious departure from realism that enables a fuller, more holistic engagement with the climate crisis (Chaudhuri, 2019). Webb (2019) argues that *Gun Island* challenges traditional realism through its use of coincidences, supernatural aspects, and mythological themes, thereby capturing the inherent unpredictability of climate change. While, in her review of *Gun Island* (2019), Clark (2019) refers to the novel as a “shaggy dog story,” pointing to its playful use of absurdity and its indirect approach to exploring deeper themes.

Ultimately, Ghosh's literary approach is not just an artistic choice but a form of resistance. By stepping outside the confines of realism, he creates space for wonder, mystery, and sacredness in a world often flattened by scientific rationalism and capitalist logic. His fiction calls for a broader understanding of justice – what some scholars call “multispecies justice” – where human and non-human lives are seen as equally valuable and interconnected. In this view, literature must evolve beyond traditional forms to better reflect the tangled, unstable, and deeply relational world we now inhabit.

Amitav Ghosh, one of the most influential voices in contemporary literature and environmental thought, argues that the modern literary tradition – especially the realistic novel – is failing to respond adequately to the climate crisis. His central arguments are most clearly laid out in his non-fiction work *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016), as well as in several of his lectures and essays. According to Ghosh, the forms of storytelling that have dominated literature for the past two centuries are no longer capable of capturing the full scale, strangeness, and urgency of today's ecological realities.

Realism, the dominant literary mode of modern fiction, is built on certain assumptions: that life is mostly stable, that change happens slowly, and that stories should revolve around individual people in familiar settings. Realist novels typically emphasize believable plots, psychological depth, and linear timelines. These qualities make them relatable and emotionally engaging, but they also make it difficult to represent the wild, unpredictable, and global nature of climate change. As Ghosh points out, real-life climate events – such as record-breaking floods, megafires, sudden animal migrations, and erratic weather – are often more extreme and bizarre than anything allowed in a typical realist novel. By focusing on “normal” life, realism can unintentionally downplay or even ignore the true scale of ecological disruption.

To address this problem, Ghosh proposes a rethinking of narrative itself. He argues that writers must move beyond the strict boundaries of Western realism and embrace alternative



ways of storytelling that can better reflect the complexity of our current moment. This includes drawing on myths, legends, folk tales, spiritual traditions, and indigenous knowledge systems. Such sources often contain deep insights about the relationship between humans and the natural world. Rather than dismissing these traditions as outdated or irrational, Ghosh sees them as vital resources for reimagining our place within a deeply interconnected and fragile planet.

For Ghosh, elements such as spiritual experiences, ancestral memories, uncanny coincidences, and the presence of supernatural beings are not “escapes from reality.” Instead, they are ways of expressing truths that rational discourse and scientific logic often fail to capture. These narrative devices can help literature reconnect with forms of understanding that have long been marginalized – especially those associated with non-Western cultures, women, and the natural world. Ghosh is critical of how Western, male-centered rationalism has dominated literary forms, often sidelining other voices and other ways of knowing.

Another key part of Ghosh’s theoretical approach is the idea that the non-human world must be treated as an active force in literature. In his view, forests, rivers, animals, storms, and even geological events are not just background scenery or symbolic tools for human stories. They have agency; they “act” in ways that matter. Literature must find ways to give voice to these forces and represent their power. This might require turning to genres that are more open to the strange and the uncanny, such as magical realism, allegory, fable, or the Gothic. These modes allow for a storytelling space where the boundaries between human and non-human, real and unreal, are blurred.

Importantly, Ghosh is not calling for writers to abandon reality. He is urging a broader definition of what counts as real. The climate crisis itself is surreal – filled with strange juxtapositions, eerie patterns, and global consequences that defy conventional logic. To write truthfully about such a world, fiction must be willing to break away from the rigid conventions of realism. Myths, dreams, symbols, and non-Western epistemologies are not luxuries or distractions – they are necessary tools for making sense of a world in crisis.

### 3. Materials and Methods

This study applies a qualitative, interpretive literary analysis to Amitav Ghosh’s *Gun Island*, drawing on ecocriticism, postcolonial theory, ecofeminism, and multispecies justice. The thematic focus examines how the novel’s use of myth, coincidence, symbolism, non-linear narrative, and non-human agency challenges dominant realist traditions in climate fiction. These strategies are evaluated for how they reframe climate change as an interconnected cultural, ecological, and ethical phenomenon.

*The Great Derangement* is used to contextualise Ghosh’s critique of Western realism, while secondary materials – critical essays, reviews, and interviews – inform and cross-check interpretations. The process involves: (1) mapping recurring motifs and mythic or supernatural elements; (2) interpreting them through selected theoretical lenses; and (3) relating findings to debates on realism versus alternative narrative traditions in climate fiction. Through this combined approach of close reading and theoretical synthesis, the study positions *Gun Island* as a literary and cultural intervention in climate change discourse.

### 4. Results

Amitav Ghosh’s *Gun Island* presents a rich and layered narrative that challenges dominant ways of thinking about the world – especially those shaped by Western rationalism, realism, and human-centered storytelling (Brady, 2019). Through a variety of narrative techniques, Ghosh offers a powerful alternative vision that embraces myth, coincidence, supernatural elements, and symbolic patterns. These strategies allow the novel to portray a world where everything is deeply connected: people, animals, weather systems, histories, and stories. Rather than offering a traditional plot focused on individual characters and realistic events, *Gun Island* creates a narrative structure that reflects the complexity and entanglement of life in the time of climate crisis. In doing so, the novel makes a strong case for the value of the “unreal” as a way of understanding and resisting ecological collapse.

#### 4.1. Myth and Spiritual Traditions to Reframe Climate Change as a Culturally Embedded and Emotionally Resonant Phenomenon Across Time

One of the most important narrative strategies Ghosh uses is his revival of ancient myth as a meaningful way to interpret the present. At the heart of *Gun Island* is the Bengali legend of Manasa Devi, the snake goddess, and the story of the Gun Merchant who defied her. This



old story is not just mentioned in passing; it becomes central to the novel's plot and themes. Rather than treating the myth as just a metaphor or symbol, Ghosh places it directly in the modern world. The legend begins to repeat itself – or perhaps continue – in the experiences of the main characters.

The story's protagonist, Deen, initially sees the myth as just a piece of outdated folklore. But as the novel progresses, he and others begin to recognize that the themes of the Manasa tale – divine anger, ecological disruption, human migration, and survival – are still highly relevant. The tale mirrors events in the modern world, including the refugee crisis, climate disasters, and strange natural occurrences. For example, Cinta and Rafi's realization that "Sicillia" in the myth refers to modern-day Sicily helps connect the old story with the real journey of the refugee boat, the "Blue Boat". This is not just a clever literary device – it's a way of showing that myths can carry deep, ecological truths that continue to matter across time.

By weaving myth into the present-day narrative, Ghosh collapses the boundaries between past and present, between folklore and fact. He shows that ancient stories may hold vital clues for understanding current crises. Myths, in this sense, become a form of long-term environmental memory. They preserve knowledge about human-nature relationships that modern science often overlooks. In challenging the idea that myths are irrational or outdated, Ghosh critiques the narrow worldview of Enlightenment thinking, which tends to separate reason from spirituality and science from story. Instead, *Gun Island* offers a model of time that is cyclical and interconnected – a time where the past continues to shape the present in unexpected ways.

#### *4.2. Narrative Strategies such as Coincidence, Symbolism, and Non-Linear Structure as a Challenge to the Limits of Western Realism in Climate Fiction*

Rather than adhering to a conventional plot structure, the narrative of *Gun Island* progresses through a sequence of uncanny coincidences and enigmatic occurrences. Characters frequently seem almost cinematic in their entrances, appearing at precisely the right moment or in remarkably unexpected settings. To add, the novel's characters, like its moments, have a way of popping up in just the opportune time, or in the place you least expect them (KR Reviews, 2020).

In his review on *Gun Island*, Guha (2019) remarks on the novel's dependence on coincidence, noting that its plot development aligns with elements commonly associated with "magical realism". This narrative feature in *Gun Island* is not a random or lazy storytelling device, but as a meaningful pattern that reflects the interconnected nature of life. Throughout the novel, strange and surprising events bring characters together in ways that seem too perfectly timed to be accidental. For example, Deen hears about the Manasa legend again through a chance conversation with a relative. He receives a phone call from Cinta right at the moment he discovers a diary mentioning a "jatra" performance about Manasa. Tipu and Rafi, characters from his earlier journey, reappear in unexpected locations, including on the "Blue Boat" and in Venice.

These coincidences are not treated as coincidences in the traditional sense. They are presented as signs that something larger is at work – some deeper force or logic that connects lives, stories, and places across the globe. Ghosh does not try to explain these events away with rational excuses. Instead, he invites the reader to consider that the world might be full of hidden connections, meaningful patterns, and unseen forms of communication.

This idea challenges the standard view of reality in Western literature, where everything must have a clear, logical cause. It suggests that the world might be more mysterious and interconnected than we usually believe. As Deen begins to accept this, he opens himself to a different way of thinking – one that values intuition, feeling, and wonder. The contrast between Deen and Piya, the scientific researcher, highlights this shift. Piya insists on facts, data, and proof, while Deen comes to believe in what he calls a "mysterious interconnectedness of all living things."

In a similar way, Ghosh uses a web of recurring symbols to hold the novel's themes together. These symbols appear throughout the book and link different storylines, characters, and settings. The snake is one of the most powerful of these symbols. It represents danger, healing, transformation, and the boundary between life and death. It appears in myths, visions, and real events, always marking a moment of change or revelation.

Places also carry symbolic weight. The shrine (or Dhaam), the Sundarbans, and Venice are more than locations – they are charged with meaning. Each place reflects a set of interconnected issues: religious belief, ecological risk, migration, colonial history, and spiritual



renewal. The shrine is where myth meets the modern world. The Sundarbans is a space of natural danger and sacred presence. Venice, with its flooding streets, is a powerful image of environmental fragility and cultural loss.

Other symbols – such as fire, spiders, and boats – also play important roles. The California wildfire, which is first imagined in this fiction and later comes true, shows how nature can strike back and how the boundary between thought and reality is fragile. The venomous spider that appears in an apartment far from nature suggests that the consequences of ecological imbalance are inescapable.

These recurring symbols, along with literary devices like coincidences, help create a sense of coherence and pattern in the novel. They are not just literary decorations – they are part of the story’s argument. They show that the world is a complex, symbolic system in which everything is connected, and nothing is purely random. This symbolic weaving supports the novel’s deeper message: that the climate crisis cannot be fully understood through science alone. It requires imagination, memory, emotion, and a willingness to engage with the “unreal”. Through its layered narrative, *Gun Island* uses myth, coincidence, the supernatural, and symbolic motifs to challenge the conventions of realism and offer a richer way to tell climate stories. Ghosh’s novel invites readers to embrace uncertainty, interconnection, and non-human perspectives. These strategies help reclaim the “unreal” not as fantasy or escape, but as a powerful tool for rethinking our world and our responsibilities in the age of ecological crisis.

#### 4.3. *Granting Agency to Non-Human Forces to Reshape the Ethical Landscape of Climate Storytelling*

One of the boldest aspects of *Gun Island* is its inclusion of supernatural events and non-human agency. These elements are not treated as fantasy or symbolic decoration. Instead, they are taken seriously as part of the novel’s reality. Ghosh does this to challenge the Anthropocene worldview of realism, where nature is just background and only humans have agency. In *Gun Island*, animals, natural forces, and spiritual beings all have important roles to play.

Examples include the king cobra that guards the shrine in the Sundarbans, Tipu’s snakebite-induced visions, and the dolphins that guide the “Blue Boat” to safety. These are not simply metaphors – they are real events in the story that shape what happens to the characters. The cobra, for instance, is not just a dangerous animal; it is treated with reverence and seen as a guardian. Tipu’s visions give him knowledge beyond what he could learn through ordinary means. The dolphins act with purpose, almost as if they understand the urgency of the humans’ situation.

These supernatural moments expand the novel’s view of reality. They suggest that the world is not just made of matter and measurable facts, but also of energies, intuitions, and relationships that we may not fully understand. Tipu’s telepathic warning to Piya, and his insight into Rafi’s mythic identity as “Ilyas,” are part of this broader view. They point to a reality where communication can happen beyond language, and where the line between the physical and the spiritual is blurred.

By including the supernatural, Ghosh critiques the arrogance of human exceptionalism – the idea that humans are separate from and superior to the rest of the natural world. Instead, he offers a vision of the world as a shared space of many forms of life and intelligence. This narrative choice supports ideas of “multispecies justice,” where animals, ecosystems, and spiritual forces all deserve recognition and respect.

## 5. Discussion

Amitav Ghosh’s *Gun Island* makes a compelling contribution to climate fiction not only through its themes but also through its narrative form. The novel offers a radical reimagining of storytelling in the Anthropocene by embracing myth, spiritual belief, and non-human agency as legitimate frameworks for understanding the climate crisis. Rather than conforming to dominant realist conventions, Ghosh’s narrative operates through fragmentation, coincidence, and layered symbolism. In doing so, the novel rejects the rationalist worldview that has long shaped both literature and environmental discourse, opening up new imaginative and ethical possibilities.

One of the most significant ways *Gun Island* redefines cli-fi is through its reclamation of myth and the “unreal” as meaningful ways of knowing. The legend of the Gun Merchant and the snake goddess Manasa, central to the novel’s plot, becomes a transhistorical and



transgeographical narrative thread that connects characters, events, and ecological crises. This integration of myth into contemporary life collapses boundaries between the sacred and the secular, the past and the present, the factual and the fictional. By allowing a folkloric story to resonate within the logic of a modern climate narrative, Ghosh refuses the Western literary bias that treats myth as irrational or outdated. As Felici (2021) argues, this reclaiming of myth is not a retreat from reality but a method of engaging with the emotional and spiritual dimensions of ecological collapse – dimensions that scientific language alone cannot adequately express.

The novel's frequent use of uncanny coincidences and symbolic patterns reinforces this approach. These narrative features are not arbitrary; they mirror the unpredictability of the climate crisis itself. When characters reappear in distant locations, or when dreams and visions appear to foreshadow real events, Ghosh is drawing attention to the strange, entangled nature of contemporary existence. The repetition of motifs such as snakes, fires, boats, and shrines weaves a symbolic web that links individual stories to planetary processes. These narrative choices align with what Ghosh calls the “uncanniness” of climate change – a feeling that something larger than human intention is at work (Ghosh, 2019). By leaning into this sense of strangeness, the novel creates a space for awe, wonder, and emotional truth – qualities that have been marginalized in literary realism.

Closely tied to myth and the uncanny is the novel's sustained focus on non-human agency. Throughout *Gun Island*, animals, weather systems, and spiritual forces are not merely background elements or metaphors; they act with purpose, intention, and impact. The cobra in the Sundarbans shrine, the dolphins guiding the refugee boat, the sudden wildfire in California, and the venomous spider appearing in an urban apartment – all of these suggest that nature is not passive, but animated and responsive. Ghosh portrays these events not as coincidences to be rationalized, but as meaningful interventions that deserve recognition within the story's reality. This narrative move resists the anthropocentric logic that dominates modern fiction and affirms what eco-critical theorists describe as “multispecies justice” – a vision of ethics that includes animals, ecosystems, and spiritual presences as participants in shared ecological futures.

This emphasis on non-human agency challenges long-standing literary and philosophical assumptions about nature. As Nayar (2012) and other ecofeminist critics have pointed out, Enlightenment rationalism has historically devalued emotional, spiritual, and indigenous knowledge systems – especially those associated with women and non-Western cultures. By restoring reverence for spiritual forces and non-human intelligences, Ghosh offers a radical counter-narrative. In *Gun Island*, the Earth is not an inert backdrop to human drama, but a living, breathing entity capable of communication and response. This worldview disrupts hierarchical binaries – human vs. animal, mind vs. body, reason vs. intuition – and invites readers to think relationally rather than hierarchically. It also aligns with postcolonial critiques of knowledge, which argue that dominant Western epistemologies have systematically excluded other forms of truth.

The novel's narrative structure further supports these thematic shifts. Rather than unfolding through linear cause-and-effect logic, *Gun Island* moves in layered, cyclical patterns. The protagonist Deen's journey is shaped not by clear goals or rational choices, but by moments of intuition, dream, and spontaneous encounter. The recurrence of motifs – such as the myth of the Gun Merchant, Tipu's snakebite-induced visions, and Cinta's interpretive insights – creates a sense of rhythm and resonance that replaces traditional plot mechanics. This structural choice reflects the disorienting temporality of climate change itself. Nixon (2011) argues in *Slow Violence* that many environmental disasters unfold gradually and invisibly, resisting conventional narrative forms. Ghosh's use of fragmented and overlapping timelines responds to this challenge by modeling an alternative mode of storytelling – one that embraces complexity, non-linearity, and uncertainty.

One of the most powerful expressions of this narrative ethos is the way *Gun Island* represents climate migration. While many literary and media portrayals of migrants reduce them to statistics or political pawns, Ghosh humanizes their experiences and connects them to broader ecological and mythological narratives. Tipu and Rafi, two central figures in the novel, are not depicted as passive victims but as agents of adaptation and survival. Their journeys are shaped not only by socio-political forces but also by spiritual signs, ancestral memories, and non-human guidance. The dolphins that lead the “Blue Boat” to safety, for example, is not a fantastical embellishment but an affirmation of the deep ties between human and non-human life.



This portrayal of migration challenges dominant narratives in two ways. First, it situates human displacement within a larger context of planetary upheaval, showing that migration is not simply an economic or political issue but an ecological and spiritual one. Second, it elevates the emotional and imaginative dimensions of migrant experience, affirming their dignity and complexity. In doing so, the novel expands the ethical scope of climate fiction. It reminds readers that climate change is not only about rising temperatures and melting ice – it is also about disrupted lives, broken lineages, and stories that need to be retold in new ways.

Finally, Ghosh's use of wonder and re-enchantment functions as a form of resistance. In a world where capitalist rationality treats the Earth as a resource to be extracted, re-enchantment restores the sacredness of the natural world. Ghosh's narrative strategy is political as well as aesthetic. By reintroducing mystery, awe, and symbolic depth into climate fiction, he challenges the disenchantment that has come to dominate both literary form and ecological discourse. This is not a turn away from reality, but a deeper engagement with its hidden dimensions. Felici (2021) emphasizes that this kind of re-enchantment is necessary to move people – not only to understand the climate crisis, but to feel it, respond to it, and act within it.

In this sense, *Gun Island* becomes a model for how literature can intervene in climate discourse not merely through content but through form. By combining myth, coincidence, non-human agency, and symbolic resonance, the novel reshapes the imaginative frameworks available for confronting ecological collapse. It challenges realism not because realism is false, but because it is insufficient. The novel affirms that to address a planetary crisis that is spiritual, emotional, cultural, and ecological all at once, we need stories that reflect that complexity – stories that cross boundaries, unsettle binaries, and open space for new relationships between humans and the more-than-human world.

In summary, *Gun Island* contributes to climate discourse by redefining both what stories tell and how they are told. It responds directly to the research questions guiding this study: it uses myth and spiritual traditions to reframe climate change as a culturally embedded experience; it grants agency to non-human forces and thereby shifts the ethical foundations of storytelling; and it adopts narrative strategies that destabilize Western realism in order to more fully represent ecological entanglement. Ghosh's fiction invites us to imagine otherwise – not only to see the climate crisis differently but to feel and narrate it anew.

## 6. Conclusions

This article has explored how Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* expands the boundaries of climate fiction by challenging the limitations of Western realism and embracing alternative narrative forms. The novel's deliberate use of myth, supernatural elements, and non-human agency marks a significant shift in how literature can respond to the ecological crisis. These narrative strategies not only disrupt the dominance of rationalist thinking but also offer new ways of imagining relationships between humans, non-humans, and the Earth.

The study has shown that *Gun Island* reclaims myth and the traditional “unreal” not as escapist devices but as powerful modes of engaging with the emotional and ethical dimensions of climate change. Through the integration of ancient stories, spiritual beliefs, and uncanny events, the novel re-enchants the world and revalidates ways of knowing that have long been dismissed by scientific and literary orthodoxies. In doing so, it encourages a broader and more inclusive literary imagination – one capable of capturing the strangeness, uncertainty, and interconnectedness that define the Anthropocene.

Another key outcome of this analysis is the recognition of non-human agency as central to the novel's narrative. Animals, weather patterns, and spiritual forces act alongside human characters, reshaping the moral and narrative structure of the story. This multispecies perspective challenges human exceptionalism and invites readers to consider an ethics of coexistence, responsibility, and mutual vulnerability.

The article also highlights how Ghosh's narrative structure – non-linear, symbolic, and guided by coincidence – mirrors the fragmented, often unpredictable rhythms of climate disruption. It demonstrates how form and content work together to resist capitalist realism and linear models of progress.

Ultimately, *Gun Island* calls for a reimagining of storytelling itself. In a time of ecological emergency, the novel suggests that reclaiming wonder, myth, and spiritual awareness may be essential not only for literary innovation but for cultivating the empathy, humility, and imaginative capacity required to face an uncertain future. It is through such stories that literature can both reflect and reshape our collective response to planetary crisis.

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