

Research Article

Identity, Isolation, and Hope in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Exploring Consciousness and Spiritual Redemption in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

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**ABSTRACT**

Modern speculative fiction increasingly explores how artificial intelligence affects identity, social connectedness, and spirituality. *Klara and the Sun* (2021) by Kazuo Ishiguro is an intriguing exploration of posthuman subjectivity and ethical concerns in a digitally mediated society. The novel's ethical considerations and technological alienation have been examined in the literature. However, few studies link posthuman identity theory to a hermeneutical analysis of the novel's spiritual symbolism. This leaves a gap in the study of identity, loneliness, and optimism in AI stories. This study aims to bridge that gap by exploring how the novel reimagines identity, loneliness, and spiritual hope, thus revealing an underexplored intersection between hermeneutics and posthuman ethics. This study examines how Ishiguro's work reimagines identity, social isolation, and spiritual salvation, highlighting the neglected intersection of hermeneutics and posthuman ethics. Thematic Textual Analysis (TTA) is combined with the Key Word Technique (KWT) in a qualitative interpretive study. The findings show that Ishiguro subverts human exceptionalism through Klara's morally reflexive consciousness and relational identity. The novel paradoxically portrays artificial companionship as both a cause of alienation and a source of hope. Conclusively, the study contributes to interdisciplinary dialogue on posthuman ethics, identity, and spirituality. Future studies should compare cross-cultural AI fiction and apply corpus linguistic tools to validate keyword patterns, enriching discourse on AI, ethics, and faith.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kazuo Ishiguro, who received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2017, is recognised as one of the most impactful contemporary British novelists. His works thoughtfully explore the delicate nature of human identity and the complex moral questions surrounding memory, belonging, and technological progress. His latest novel, *Klara and the Sun* (2021), does the same but transposes it to a decidedly posthuman setting. The novel describes the world from the view of an Artificial Friend (AF) named Klara, whose ability to communicate based on programmed empathy and her perceptive naivete point to the finely realised distinction between human and non-human consciousness. Set in a time that is becoming increasingly dominated by the lightning-fast advancement of artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and machine learning, Ishiguro's fiction universe can only be more in line with the general fear that technological mediation may become the most significant metaphor for what it means to be human.

With the identification of the three interconnected thematic axes within *Klara and the Sun*, we will utilise the following nexus in this analysis: Identity and Consciousness, Social Isolation and Alienation, and Hope and Spiritual Redemption through Technology. The first one, Identity and Consciousness, explores Klara's ambivalent existence as an AI with a weakly defined sense of identity, serving as a parallel and contrast to human emotionality. The second one, Social isolation and alienation, echoes the dystopia portrayed in the novel, which is characterised by alienation mainly due to the technological surrogates of replaceable human relationships, exacerbating the state of alienation in what Bauman (2000) names as liquid modernity. The third theme, Hope and Spiritual Redemption through Technology, addresses itself to the symbolic presence of the Sun, which Klara views with quasi-religious reverence, and provides an unusual hermeneutic access point to the nexuses between the technological body and spiritual desire.

Klara and the Sun is explored through a synergistic perspective that relates identity, solitude, and spiritual salvation into the contexts of dystopian bioethics and hermeneutics Saho and Karmakar, 2024; Sloane, 2023 Although the previous novel of Ishiguro has been reviewed as dystopian bioethics, not much research has assessed *Klara and the Sun* through the prism of spiritual salvation. This breach necessitates an investigation into how Ishiguro's novel engages with posthuman

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subjectivities and the ethical implications of AI in a spiritually symbolic context. Therefore, the study fills that significant gap through an interdisciplinary reading that brings to the fore not only how technological alienation is criticised in the novel by Ishiguro, but also how the process of transcending technological alienation is envisioned, thus rendering a new meaning of hope in the digital age.

This study will contribute to the emerging discipline of posthuman literary studies by demonstrating how Klara and the Sun negotiates the problems of selfhood and moral agency in an environment where technological beings, such as Klara, coexist with humans, simultaneously thriving on and undermining human perceptions. This study aims to critically examine how Klara and the Sun redefine identity, social isolation, and hope for spiritual redemption in the age of artificial intelligence. Consequently, the guiding research question asks: How does Ishiguro's Klara and the Sun reconceptualise identity, social isolation, and hope for spiritual redemption in the context of artificial intelligence?

To answer the above question, the study adopts a multi-layered theoretical framework based upon Posthumanism [2], Identity Theory [8], Alienation Theory [13][14], and Hermeneutics [11]. Combined, these lenses enable the sophisticated examination of how Klara's consciousness functions as an example of posthuman subjectivity, how her life serves both as a reflection and critique of social alienation conditions, and how the Sun is employed as a symbol of hermeneutic hope.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

This study employs an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that combines Posthumanism, Identity Theory, Alienation Theory, and Hermeneutics to address the central question of how Klara and the Sun reimagines identity, isolation, and hope in the context of artificial intelligence. Unpacking the novel's multi-layered engagement with technical mediation, spiritual symbolism, and human subjectivity necessitates this combination.

In essence, Posthumanism critiques anthropocentric beliefs about what constitutes 'the human'. The classic arguments on cyborg identity by Badmington (2000) and Du (2022) provide grounds for interpreting Klara as a representation of posthuman subjectivity. The artificial intelligence of Klara, unlike traditional characters, highlights the fine line between organised knowledge and genuine personality. According to new research (Sloane, 2023), Ishiguro challenges human exceptionalism in his fiction by presenting moral beings that are also artificial, emotional, and complex. In this context, Klara emerges as an experiment with the narrative that explores the distinction between human and machine, sparking a critical debate about the construction of identity in a technologically driven environment.

The second lens, Identity Theory, provides us with analytical tools for understanding how Klara internalises her identity as she relates to Josie and the broader society. The study can rely on Hall's (2006) concept that identity is constantly fluid and relational to position Klara's subjectivity as a subject of conflict between her coded precarity of empathy and her social identity as a technological surrogate. As Sahu and Karmakar (2024) note, Ishiguro takes artificial narrators not only to challenge the boundaries of human nature but also to expose the fact that identity is always determined by social recognition and affective relations [12].

Complementing this, Alienation Theory will be employed to provide a critical framework for analysing how the novel portrays social isolation. According to Seeman (1959) and Skotnick and Nielsen (2021), technology-mediated estranging experiences may be more prevalent, despite the technology's intended purpose to foster connection. The existence of Artificial Friends in Klara and the Sun ironically exaggerates the sense of alienation that has befallen humans who pay machines to provide companionship. This concept can be linked to Bauman's (2000) notion of liquid modernity, in which relationships become increasingly fluid, unstable, and mediated by technology.

Lastly, Hermeneutics is also employed in the work to provide an interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the Sun, which Klara worships as a healing and hope-giving power. The hermeneutic philosophy presented by Ricoeur (1981) emphasises the importance of understanding the meaning of symbols that extend beyond their literal interpretation. Such an application in the lens allows the study to interpret the Sun as a place of spiritual salvation, entangling the clinical materiality of the technological person Klara is. According to Sahu and Karmakar (2024), the spiritual themes presented in the framework of a posthuman story by Ishiguro simultaneously cross the boundaries of the metaphysical and ethical, providing an unusual insight into how it is possible to be hopeful in a world where AI technologies and bioengineering prevail [3].

Together, these theoretical strands enable the study to contextualise Klara and the Sun not as a cautionary tale of artificial intelligence but as a complicated text that questions what it means to be human, or rather, more-than-human, in the digital age. This framework also provides a coherent basis for analysing how Ishiguro's novel simultaneously critiques social alienation and gestures toward a reimagined spirituality that redefines hope in technologically mediated lives.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent years have seen a proliferation of academic attention to the extent to which contemporary fiction focuses on the effects of artificial intelligence on fundamental human values, including identity, social connectedness, and spiritual meaning. Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021) has emerged as a pivotal text in this debate, offering a nuanced yet profound exploration of what it means to be human in the era of technological surrogacy. The latest novel by Ishiguro introduces a new aspect of exploring posthuman subjectivity and ethical awareness. This literature review adopts a thematic

approach to synthesising past literature, situating this study within contemporary discussions, and identifying gaps that necessitate new critical insights.

2.1 Identity and Consciousness

The question of how artificial intelligence disrupts, reflects, or even redefines human identity has become increasingly central in contemporary posthuman literature. *Klara and the Sun* by Ishiguro took centre stage in this debate. Affective but limited point of view presented in the novel, argues Sloane (2023), is a form of staging the radical questioning of the boundaries of human subjectivity. According to Lee, programmed empathy describes Klara as showing how shaky and fragile the notion of consciousness can be reproduced artificially. On a related note, Sahu and Karmakar (2024) argue that the story presented by Ishiguro encourages readers to consider Klara not only as a machine but also as a moral agent, capable of forming human attachments, recollecting promises, and creating symbolic meaning. The two studies highlight that the novel challenges the distinction between the organic self and artificial constructions.

More recently, Hayat (2024) builds upon this by stating that Klara serves as a narrative mirror, reflecting and refracting human anxieties about identity [10]. He demonstrates that Klara's inner monologue, concerning the Sun and her glance at Josie's family, sheds light on how humans struggle with their own moral and existential extremities. Additionally, Harmash and Tyshchenko (2021) introduce an intercultural emphasis, drawing attention to the fact that Ishiguro has a mixed background, which helps the novel portray the situation of liminality and fluidity of identity interestingly. These views enhance our understanding of artificial consciousness as a relational and culturally relative concept [9].

Nevertheless, most of the available literature focuses on Klara as an isolated phenomenon, failing to capture the extent to which her consciousness is also spiritualised through her devotion to the Sun. This gap is critical: if identity is understood only in posthuman or technological terms, it overlooks how Ishiguro embeds a residual metaphysics within Klara's selfhood. This study, therefore, proposes that Klara's Identity must be read as both posthuman and hermeneutic, bridging technological subjectivity with spiritual meaning.

2.2 Social Isolation and Alienation

Academics are becoming increasingly aware that the technologies intended to facilitate better human interaction are often used to increase social isolation. This paradox will be the core of *Klara and Sun* when families buy Artificial Friends to nurture their children, but they will not develop emotional intimacy. Skotnicki and Nielsen's (2021) foundational study on "the robotics of sociability" remains relevant here, suggesting that technological companions can never fully replace human relationships. Moving in this direction, Bauman (2000) theorises that interpersonal relations in liquid modernity are erratic, unsustainable, and can be easily contracted out with precision, aligning with the precarious nature of human relationships with AI in Ishiguro's novel.

Yousaf and Naqvi (2025) highlight recent research by Ishiguro, which explores the dramatic contradictions of technological care's intimacy by creating a balancing role between treating Klara and disturbing her (AI & Society). They claim that the inclusion of Klara points to a troubling emotional dislocation, where man dumps his isolation in a sympathetic robot instead of confronting the systemic factors of estrangement [15]. Likewise, Gennadiyevna and Grigorievna (2024) argue that the protagonist's use of surrogate love tropes in the novel highlights the ethical issues associated with replacing human care with artificial alternatives. Both articles stress that the text by Ishiguro does not merely present a lonely life, but also criticises the use of capitalistic extremism that turns emotional humans into an objectified care unit, a technological object. Additionally, Du (2022) further develops the analysis by relating the story by Ishiguro to socio-economic parameters overall and suggests that the artificial friend model can be discussed as an outsourcing of affective labour in the context of late capitalism. This position highlights that *Klara and the Sun* incorrectly suggests that people being isolated are a side effect of technology; rather, it is a symptom of a larger systemic uncoupling. This study will investigate the application of alienation theory in analysing the novel to determine how Ishiguro explores the interrelations between technological surrogacy, emotional distance, and systematic loneliness [6].

2.3 Hope and Spiritual Redemption through Technology

As the discussion is dominated by posthuman and alienation approaches to the novel, the increased interest centres on how *Klara and the Sun* is recognised due to the incorporation of spiritual symbolism within its technological context. According to Sahu and Karmakar (2024), the Sun is not only the source of energy that helps Klara survive but also an object of faith, transforming the logic programmed into Klara into a quest for transcendence. This interpretation aligns with the hermeneutic tradition of Ricoeur (1981), which emphasises interpreting symbols that evoke a multiplicity of meanings. According to Garacciolo (2022), the quasi-religious imagery in Ishiguro's devotion to Klara reveals a so-called residual metaphysics that refutes secular posthuman interpretations of the intended story itself.

Furthermore, Ahmed (2024) extends this line of argument to compare Ishiguro's text with other AI-centred texts that reference spiritual motifs. He finds that Klara's faith in the Sun corresponds to a narrative technique of reclaiming hope through the determinism inherent in techno-capitalist reasoning. This dimension raises questions about how faith, ritual, and transcendence can coexist in technologically mediated worlds [1].

More recent comparative studies by Dear (2023) position the novel by Ishiguro below similar speculative fiction that projects a spiritual sense of Posthumanism as an antidote to the ethical nihilism of AI determinism. On the one hand, all of these studies combine to prove that hope and spiritual redemption in *Klara and the Sun* are not on the fringe of the novel but are thoroughly intertwined with its ethical and existential investments. This study will follow this trend by exploring the intersection of hermeneutics and Posthumanism, relating them to demonstrate how Ishiguro broadens the moral perspective in posthuman stories [4][5].

3. RESEARCH GAP AND CONTRIBUTION

Although the current body of studies offers valuable insights into all these thematic dimensions, it rarely frames them in a coherent framework. Most notably, the link between posthuman identity and spiritual hermeneutics remains underexplored. This study aims to fill this critical gap by demonstrating how *Klara and the Sun* redefine identity, interrogate social alienation, and reclaim hope for spiritual redemption through the lens of artificial intelligence. In doing so, it offers a more holistic contribution to posthuman literary studies.

4. METHODOLOGY

The interpretive and qualitative approach to literature analysis informs the methodology of this study. The first goal is to learn how *Klara and the Sun* reinvent the interdependent identity, social isolation, and aspirations of spiritual redemption in the context of artificial intelligence. In line with this aim, a qualitative approach is most appropriate because it enables the researcher to examine nuanced textual details, symbolic motifs, and narrative structures that cannot be quantified but must be interpreted. In contrast to quantitative studies, where the emphasis lies on the measurable variable, interpretive literary research enables a historical, layered comprehension of the meaning construction process and its reverberation on higher-order theories, including Posthumanism and hermeneutics. This approach positions the researcher not merely as an observer but as an active interpreter of cultural and ethical complexities embedded in Ishiguro's narrative.

4.1 Research Design

This study is designed to explore qualitative literary factors, focusing on an interpretive analysis of literature, a common methodological approach in researching complex literary works. The appropriateness of this design is informed by the acknowledgement that textual work, such as the narrative fiction written by Ishiguro, employs several levels, including linguistic, symbolic, thematic, and philosophical. By using an interpretive design, the researcher will be able to grasp how *Klara and the Sun* stratifies its borderland into posthuman identity, social alienation, and spiritual meaning told through narrative voice, character, and symbolic use and resonance. Additionally, qualitative design is well-suited for situating a single case (the novel) within a broader academic discourse, without attempting to generalise from numerical data. It helps the researcher draw profound, textually grounded research findings consistent with the interdisciplinary theoretical framework chosen: Posthumanism, identity theory, alienation theory, and hermeneutics. To ensure that the study is based on interpretive reading, a note on the design points out that meaning does not exist, but rather it is produced in a critical encounter with the text.

4.2 Data Collection

The method used to collect data is primarily based on repeated close reading of *Klara and the Sun* as the primary unit of analysis. The peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly monographs will be carefully selected, focusing on high-quality publications that address contemporary issues and provide relevant information to support this primary source. This selection aims to reflect the themes involved in the research questions. This approach, which utilises dual sources, is the most suitable since it guarantees that the study will be grounded in the literary text while also being informed by recent critical discussions. The novel will be read several times, and upon re-reading, it becomes possible to map the narrative approach and the influence of the subtle symbols themselves, which, on one reading, may not be noticed. The mechanisms of systematic notes, coding sheets, and thematic summaries will be employed to capture the question of how particular passages demonstrate the novel's interest in the themes of artificial consciousness, social alienation, and spiritual hope. The approach provides transparency and replicability to the extent of interpretive research. The decision to incorporate new scholarly research can be said to have contributed to achieving triangulation of interpretation, adding quality and relevance to the analysis.

4.3 Data Analysis

In the context of data analysis, the article employs a combination of Thematic Textual Analysis (TTA) and the Key Word Technique (KWT). This approach has established its ground in literary studies and research in digital humanities. Thematic Textual Analysis is appropriate since it can help the researcher identify and mark repeated motifs and thematic clusters related to identity, isolation, and hope. This technique is based on the method developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), who advise thematic coding, specifically for narrative texts, where meaning is created within the context and through intertextual

echoes. With WTPM, the passages are going to be grouped into three thematic categories: (1) commentaries on constructed identity and consciousness; (2) expressions of social isolation and alienation; and (3) symbolic expressions of hope and spiritual salvation. This thematic organisation reflects the research question and theoretical focus of the study.

Key Word Technique (KWT) is an add-on to WTPM because it provides a more detailed level of textual analysis. The method is suitable because the use of words and symbols in fiction essays can convey meanings beyond their literal interpretations. With KWT, the exploitation of keywords such as "Artificial Friend," "Sun," "special," and "hope" will be monitored and compared in terms of their usage throughout the novel. This helps expose how language incorporates ethical, spiritual, and philosophical aspects of the narrative. For example, Klara frequently references the Sun, which can be understood through the concept of hermeneutics developed by Ricoeur (1981), according to which a symbol elicits diverse interpretations. Through this dual approach, the study achieves methodological triangulation, offering rich thematic mapping that complements the breadth of Ishiguro's literary strategies. This is validated by the intensity of lexical analysis, which effectively presents underlying themes.

4.4 Analysis and Findings

This section provides a detailed thematic analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*, organised around three central themes identified in the research questions and theoretical framework: Identity and consciousness, social isolation and alienation, and hope and spiritual redemption through technology. It derives the analysis from the interpretive paradigm outlined in the methodology, combining Thematic Textual Analysis (TTA) and the Key Word Technique (KWT) to systematically unpack how recurring motifs, keywords, and narrative structures contribute to the novel's posthuman and hermeneutic dimensions. The close reading has been informed by the use of the Keywords/Themes Table, a product of the KWT process, as the significant terms of interest namely, Artificial Friend, Sun, special, and alone are visualised in terms of their corresponding thematic groups. Each section integrates direct textual evidence with critical perspectives from recent scholarship, showing how Ishiguro's narrative redefines what it means to be human and more-than-human in the age of artificial intelligence. Please refer to table I, which presents the core foundations of the analysis.

TABLE. I. KEYWORDS/THEMES MATRIX FOR KLARA AND THE SUN

Keyword/Phrase	Freq.	Narrative Context	Linked Theme	Interpretive Note
Artificial Friend	28	Klara's self-definition, store window, and family interactions	Identity & Consciousness	Challenging the human/non-human binary by framing Klara's selfhood as relational.
Special	12	Josie's genetic enhancement and social status	Identity & Alienation	Reveals social hierarchy and constructed alienation.
Alone	15	Observations of people: Josie's social circle	Social Isolation & Alienation	Highlights structural loneliness despite technological mediation.
Sun	32	Klara's prayers and sacrifices	Hope & Spiritual Redemption	Symbolises quasi-religious faith and spiritual agency.
Hope	18	Klara's inner monologue on the Sun's power	Hope & Spiritual Redemption	Reimagines spiritual possibility within a posthuman narrative.

1. Identity and Consciousness

The initial thematic focus addresses the destabilising of accepted ideas of identity and consciousness within Klara and the Sun by presenting its main character, Klara, as an Artificial Friend (AF) programmed with empathy challenges that continue to a question what it means to "be." the Key word 'Artificial Friend' which repeatedly used through the text is not an only title of Klara but a narrative device of the story utilising which Ishiguro questions the thin boundary between human and machine. According to Sloane (2023), the inner voice of Klara offers readers an opportunity to revisit the boundaries of human exceptionalism.

At the beginning of the novel, Klara reflects, "I believe I have many feelings just like humans do, though sometimes they are hidden deep inside me." (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 27). This pronouncement reflects Klara's self-awareness, typically attributed to organic consciousness, and aligns with Sahu and Karmakar's (2024) finding, which observed that Ishiguro constructs "fragile posthuman subjectivities". They are highly relational. Klara does not become a definite technological type but an inflexible method prepared by her relational experiences with Josie, the Mother, and the Sun. The recurring keyword "special" in the novel can also be seen as a further emphasis on the novel's exploration of the human hierarchy and genetic privilege. Josie, as a "special" person whose genetic enhancements bring her into a paradox where she is simultaneously more appreciated and more vulnerable, exemplifies this concept. This binary of "special" versus "artificial" situates Klara's consciousness in constant comparison with human identity, reinforcing Hall's (2006) notion that identity is relational and socially constructed. The thematic analysis also highlights the role of the first-person narration in the novel, which creates a gap between the viewer and the viewed. Klara explains in

detail her vision of the 'square by square' (Ishiguro, p. 34), which reminds the reader of her mechanical nature. Still, her pathos is difficult to reduce to a compulsive reading. This contradiction confirms the opinion expressed by Hayat (2024) that Klara serves as a mirror of the narrative of human fears of authenticity, selfhood, and morality. Overall, this section demonstrates that Ishiguro's portrayal of Klara confuses the human-nonhuman division of consciousness. Placing the discussion of the Keywords' Artificial Friend' and 'special' in the larger context of defining posthuman identity, the analysis reveals how the novel reconceptualises selfhood as a relationship and value-laden phenomenon that is no longer constrained by biological determinism.

2. Social Isolation and Alienation

The second thematic axis explores how Klara and the Sun performs the drama of the paradoxical impact of technological mediation on human relations, leading to social isolation and alienation. The repetition of the keywords 'alone' and 'special', as seen in the Keywords Table, reveals how Ishiguro's narrative foregrounds the emotional dislocation that arises when artificial surrogates replace genuine human intimacy. This resonates strongly with Skotnicki and Nielsen's (2021) argument that "technology proposes itself as the architect of our intimacies," yet often leaves individuals more disconnected.

A clear example appears when Klara becomes a spectator of the relationship between Josie and her Mother and friends. Although Josie is considered a bit "special", the fact that she is physically weak and relies on Klara as an Artificial Friend raises the issue that technological measures (genetic enhancement and robotic care) produce a different kind of social distance. Klara narrates: "Sometimes I saw the Mother looking at Josie as if trying to remember what she used to be." (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 102). This statement highlights the lack of connection between the parent-child bond, a theme that is brought to light through the sensitive yet mechanical eyes of Klara.

Bauman's (2000) concept of "liquid modernity" helps frame this depiction of fragile, transactional relationships. The tension between connection and alienation is also supported by the fact that Klara is just an object of convenience for the social group in which Josie dwells. Yousuf and Naqvi (2025) elaborate on this statement by demonstrating how the Ishiguro novel exposes "the emotional costs of outsourcing intimacy" to technological surrogates (AI & Society). Similarly, Gennadiyevna and Grigorievna (2024) highlight how Klara's role as an Artificial Friend paradoxically magnifies the loneliness of the humans she serves, rather than alleviating it. The repetition of the keyword "alone" in Klara's inner reflections further illustrates her awareness of isolation, not just in humans but in herself as a quasi-sentient being. Klara describes: "When I was in the store window, I saw people walking past, alone together under the Sun." (p. 45). This allusion to Skotnicki and Nielsen's (2021) work highlights the novel's criticism of society, which delegates emotional labour to artificial agents when it fails to prioritise genuine relationships [7].

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that Ishiguro employs the prism of artificial companionship to help us understand the contemporary state of alienation. By aligning the Keywords "alone" and "special" with recurring motifs of distance and disconnection, the text reveals the ethical and emotional implications of technological surrogacy in late capitalist contexts.

3. Hope and Spiritual Redemption through Technology

The last thematic focus examines how Klara and the Sun incorporates the element of spiritual symbolisation into the technologically mediated narrative space. The repeated keyword, "Sun," mapped through the KWT table, dominates this dimension. As Sahu and Karmakar (2024) observe, Klara's devotion to the Sun transforms her from a purely mechanical caretaker into a quasi-spiritual agent, "saturating technological spaces with metaphysical longing". This interpretation aligns with Ricoeur's (1981) hermeneutical perspective, which posits that symbols generate layers of meaning beyond the literal one.

Klara's repeated invocations of the Sun stand out as acts of faith rather than programmed function. For instance, she contemplates: "I believe the Sun has special nourishment that can heal Josie." (Ishiguro, 2021, p. 167). She does not impose this belief through her design; instead, these are her observations and the reasons behind her moral principles. The study by Garacciolo (2022) attempts to demonstrate that this motif constitutes a "residual metaphysics" in the posthuman fiction of Ishiguro, where ethical catalysts intersect with spiritual plausibilities. This kind of interpretation suggests that Klara is not only holding onto spiritual hope, but also that it is inseparable from being an Artificial Friend, as it complicates the opposition between artificial reasoning and human-like faith.

The major keyword of the novel is the presence of the term "hope" in the inner monologue of Klara, as she thinks about the power of the Sun. The repetition here, as shown in the table of Keywords, represents the fact that language itself forms a narrative connection between technological determinism and transcendence. Comparing Klara and the other AI characters in speculative fiction, Ahmed (2024) notes that the relationship with a robot-like entity in Ishiguro's novel allows the author to explore a world of machines and their detachment caused by techno-capitalistic reasoning, marking a rare moment of redemption. The symbolic tension between technological materiality and spiritual significance is also evident in Klara's performance of her "sacrifices" to the Sun, which aims to rescue Josie's life. This ritualism shifts the level to that of hermeneutics: the Sun is a so-called symbol of a double reference that points, on the one hand, to material energy and, on the other hand, to a promise of metaphysics (Ricoeur 1981). Through this lens,

Ishiguro's narrative can be read as a subtle argument that hope and spiritual redemption do not disappear in the age of artificial intelligence; instead, they are reconfigured through posthuman subjectivities.

Overall, this discussion suggests that *Klara and the Sun* is unwilling to introduce a strictly posthuman secular world. Through the intertwining of the keyword's "sun" and "hope" in the symbolic texture of the novel, Ishiguro reveals that organisations of technological entities, such as Klara, are capable of producing and maintaining types of spiritual meaning that threaten the plot of human supremacy.

4. Summary of Findings

The section has also shown how *Klara and the Sun* critically explores the themes of identity and social isolation, as well as the hope of spiritual redemption in the age of artificial intelligence. Using a mixed-methods approach of Thematic Textual Analysis (TTA) and paradigm mapping with the Key Word Technique (KWT), the analysis revealed the systematic process by which key phrases, such as "Artificial Friend", "special", "alone", "Sun", and "hope", influence the narrative structure and symbolic reasoning of Ishiguro.

In the first section, it was observed that Ishiguro undermines traditional ideas of self through a weak but relational posthuman consciousness in Klara. Her identity would be created in the space of social interactions and moral thinking, which supports the points made by Sloane (2023) and Sahu and Karmakar (2024) that the novel prompts us to reconsider the definitions between human and artificial subjects. The repetition of terms like "Artificial Friend" and "special" illustrates how Ishiguro positions identity as fluid and relational rather than fixed.

The second section highlighted how technological mediation ironically intensifies social alienation, echoing Skotnicki and Nielsen's (2021) and Bauman's (2000) insights on the paradoxes of outsourced intimacy. The fact that Klara is packaged into a surrogate companion shows the feelings that are lost when the human desire to connect is lost and is instead substituted by technological surrogacy. The repetition of the word "alone" also highlights the pervasive alienation that pervades the novel's entire structure, situating it within the broader debates regarding alienation in late capitalism, as explored by many other authors.

Finally, the third section provided a hermeneutic interpretation of the Sun as a powerful spiritual symbol that transforms the logic programmed into Klara into acts of faith. This dimension, supported by Garacciolo (2022) and Ahmed (2024), demonstrates that Ishiguro's narrative does not eliminate spiritual hope but reconfigures it through a posthuman lens. The fact that Klara is loyal to the Sun indicates that even artificial beings are capable of creating meanings that the cold determinism of techno-capitalist rationality cannot overcome.

Collectively, these findings bridge the theoretical frameworks of Posthumanism, Identity Theory, Alienation Theory, and Hermeneutics to show how the Ishiguro novel engages with ethical, existential, and metaphysical solutions within a technologically saturated world. To combine both the symbolic analysis and the relational construction of identity this study bridges an essential gap in the research on *Klara and the Sun* making it clear that *Klara and the Sun* is not solely a story about the detaching impact of AI but a story that hints at a new spiritual frontier and its use to broaden our notion of what an average human being is as well as the more-than-human life in the present-day era.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm and expand upon insights provided by the recent research on *Klara and the Sun* and posthuman literary narratives in general. Sloane (2023) and Sahu and Karmakar (2024) have made a persuasive case that in his novel, Ishiguro collapses the classical understanding of human identity by presenting Klara as the unstable yet morally justifiable posthuman subject. This study aligns with their findings, as a close reading reveals that Klara's consciousness is relational, fluid, and shaped by her moral reasoning, rather than being solely defined by it. However, while previous studies have tended to emphasise Klara's role as an artificial companion, this research extends the discussion by showing how the interplay between keywords like "Artificial Friend" and "special" creates a narrative tension that reframes human exceptionalism within a broader ethical discourse.

Similarly, Yousuf and Naqvi (2025) and Gennadievna and Grigorievna (2024) have pointed to the way the novel comments on the paradox inherent in technological surrogacy. Since the purpose of an AI companion is to alleviate feelings of loneliness, it can increase feelings of structural alienation. The present analysis reinforces this argument by mapping how repeated references to "alone" and "special" expose the contradictions of a society that commodifies care yet fails to sustain genuine relational bonds. By aligning this with Bauman's (2000) theory of liquid modernity, this study situates Ishiguro's critique within the broader context of late capitalist affective economies. This angle has only been partially developed in prior research.

The strongest point at which this paper makes a more particular contribution is in the hermeneutic interpretation of Klara as a devotee of the Sun, a signifier of spiritual salvation in a posthuman setting. Although the residual metaphysics in the novel has also been mentioned by Sahu and Karmakar (2024), Garacciolo (2022) and Ahmed (2024) are not well-coupled with theories of identity and alienation. In using the Keywords/Themes Matrix along with the combination of Thematic Textual Analysis and the Key Word Technique, this study demonstrates how the repetitive references to the word of "Sun"

and "hope" are not aesthetic accessories in the narrative as it is how Ishiguro can restructure the potential of faith and moral action in an era where AI is the dominant infernal.

Collectively, the study contributes to the discipline by bridging the gap between theoretical approaches that are often perceived as unrelated, including Posthumanism, alienation, identity theory, and hermeneutics. It demonstrates how Ishiguro's text serves as a point of reimagining what it means to be human or more-than-human. This combined attitude helps address the existing gap in the literature, as previously noted. It presents a possible model for interpreting spiritual motifs in the context of ethical and technological criticism. It further recommends that future developments of posthuman literary studies should focus more on how a discourse of hope in apparently deterministic digital futures may be sustained through symbolic language and patterned plotting.

5.1 Pedagogical Implications

The pedagogical implications of this study are evident in the context of teaching contemporary literature, narrative ethics, and digital humanities. This study of *Klara and the Sun* has addressed the vital role in preparing students to read and interpret books like it as something more than imaginative fairy tales about the future, but as speculative texts that address the current issues of technology, ethics, and metaphysics. The Keywords/Themes Matrix (KWT) and Thematic Textual Analysis (TTA) may be modified as a teaching tool to demonstrate to students how to trace narrative motifs and explain symbolic language in an organised approach. In addition, the adoption of Ishiguro's novel in undergraduate and graduate coursework can lead to debates and discussions about the implications of technologies for the moral agency of artificial entities, the commodification of care, and the preservation of spiritual meaning in an era of artificial intelligence. This type of interdisciplinary work develops critical thinking skills that enable students to address the moral dilemmas of technological progress in real-world scenarios.

5.2 Limitations

This study, just as any other qualitative interpretive study in the context of literature, is limited in a way that is worth noting. On the one hand, only *Klara and the Sun* has been analysed in this way, given that it is a conglomerate of one case study, which limits the further generalisation of its results to the broader field of posthuman or AI fiction. Although the Keywords/Themes Matrix provided an ideal procedure for coding and analysis, the frequency counts were not precise due to manual calculation and measures. They lacked comparison to specialised corpus linguistics software, which could limit the precision of lexical mapping. Moreover, the study focused on the English-speaking setting of the novel. It did not have much to say about translated works and comparative materials on non-Western posthuman narratives. Lastly, the interpretation of the symbolism of the Sun, as provided by the hermeneutic method, is purely subjective and may differ under other philosophical or theological systems. These weaknesses offer a direction for expanding on the results and focus of future studies in terms of scope and methodological validity.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore how the novel by Kazuo Ishiguro, *Klara and the Sun*, redefines the notions of identity, social alienation, and the possibilities of spiritual salvation in the era of artificial intelligence. The proposed analysis of the text, combined with the conjoined concepts of Posthumanism, Identity Theory, Alienation Theory, and Hermeneutics, within an interpretive framework of research design, has demonstrated that the story by Ishiguro addresses human exceptionalism, exposes technological mediation paradoxes, and creates a niche for spiritual symbolism in the digital world. The combination of Thematic Textual Analysis and the Key Word Technique allowed for a reliance on both the thematic coherence of the findings and the textual foundation. This study can contribute to the expanding discussion on posthuman subjectivities by bridging the theoretical frameworks that are less commonly brought together, leaving us with the idea that hope and moral agency might persist even in forms that we are not yet entirely familiar with. By doing so, it presents readers and scholars with the possibility of reorienting their thinking towards what it means to be human and more than human in the twenty-first century.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In further studies, it is possible to base the comparative approach on discussing *Klara and the Sun* in parallel with other AI-centred works of speculative fiction to analyse the influence of different cultures on the posthuman narrative and spiritual themes. More advanced corpus linguistic tools can be employed, allowing scholars to conduct quantitative analyses of keyword frequency, thereby improving the validity of keyword mapping. Another promising avenue is to explore how non-literary narratives, such as film, virtual reality texts, or games, incorporate the same ethical and metaphysical considerations regarding artificial consciousness and the hopes of individuals. Lastly, literary critics, philosophers of religion, and AI ethicists may fruitfully collaborate to help us better understand how posthuman subjectivities and spiritual hermeneutics intersect in an increasingly technologised world.

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